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ABSTRACT

This volume contains both literature from South Asia and articles about South Asian literature. The first article consists of an interview with a leading Pakistani poet, N.M. Rashed, who discusses modern Urdu literature. Other articles are: "Five 'Dangerous' Books"--on censorship in East Pakistan--by P. Sarkar; "Baluchi Language and Literature" and "Pashto Language and Literature" by A. Bausani; "Sindhi Literature" by A. Schimmel; and "Ahmed Ali and 'Twilight in Delhi'"--the genesis of a Pakistani novel--by D.D. Anderson. Literary selections, translated into English, include nine poems by N.M. Rashed; three poems by Z. Haider; and six stories--"The Brock" by A. Husain, "The Tale of a 'Tulsi' Tree" by S. Waliullah, "Ghaazi Mard" by G. Abbas, "The Rain" by A. Al-Ajad, "Conspirators" by E. Sajjad, and "Of Blackened Face" by J. Abro. The volume also contains three literary reviews by J.P. Gemill, R. Gerulaitis, and H. Moayyad. (JM)

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Mahfil *interviews*

N. M. RÁSHED

Leading Pakistani poet speaks out on modern Urdu literature

Mahfil: Although your name is intimately associated with the "new" poetry of Urdu, you are not considered a "Progressive" poet. How would you describe your poetry, especially in contradistinction to the Progressive poetry of the late Thirties and Forties? In much of your poetry, you show a definite Western influence. Which Western poets influenced you most and why?

Mr. Rashed: The movement for the "new" poetry with which I am associated was in the first instance a step towards the liberation of Urdu poetry from the tyranny of form; and, secondly, it aimed at bringing poetry closer to the realities of modern life. The *ghazal*, the most common traditional verse form, had served a very good purpose over the centuries, but had largely become inert both in form and content. It was on the one hand a prisoner of rhyme and meter; and, on the other, was hidebound by certain standardized symbols, images and myths, which continued to repeat themselves from poet to poet. In the *ghazal*, it was always the same hungering lover talking of his unending suffering to an ever-indifferent, cruel beloved, and in this seeking his personal catharsis. The beloved, in turn, was sometimes a harlot (who could ever talk of his love to a noble woman relegated to the harem?), and more often a male companion in a homosexual relationship; a feudal lord on whom the poet largely depended for his existence; a spiritual leader; or, when the poet soared a little higher, a male-God, with the usual Quranic attributes of the Divine Being, ranging from the profoundest love and kindness to extreme injustice and unkindness.

A part of the symbolism of the *ghazal*, built around the imaginary "love affairs" of the *bulbul*, or nightingale, and the rose, and the moth and the candle, and around the relationship between the *saqi*, or the cup-bearer, and the ever-thirsty drunkards, had, over this long period of time, become an extravagant cliché. The myths, mostly drawn from stories of the Qurán, which are practically the same as those of the Bible, or from other Islamic lore, constantly repeated themselves; the Fall of Adam; the passion of Moses; the iconoclasm of Abraham and his defiance of Nimrod; Christ as a super-healer; the Virgin Mary as a paragon of chastity; Joseph's masculine charm and the illicit love of Potiphar's wife for him; Mansúr Hallάj, who was hanged for declaring himself "the Finite Truth"; the love of Majnún for Laila, the Arab beauty; the love and sacrifice of Farhád for Shírin, the

Persian queen; and so on and so forth.

These myths and symbols had together lent some semi-ethical texture to the traditional poetry; and the traditional poets, in their discourses about their suffering souls, had also evinced some understanding of the psychology of love and jealousy and its influence on man's spirit - alternately sublimating and corrupting - and had developed some kind of humanistic approach to life, which should rank some of them, such as Ghálib, among the world's great teachers

But this complex of myths and symbols, as I have already said, had already become jarringly repetitive, and had rendered Urdu poetry out of tune with the times, as even Hálí, the first "modern" Urdu poet had felt, more than half a century ago. Particularly, it no longer helped in an interpretation of human equations in the light of modern experience, or in relating poetry to the newly emerging social, political and economic problems. The problem of the "new" poet thus was, firstly, to write "as himself," or as an individual rather than a type; and, secondly, to talk about the suffering soul of mankind as a whole, rather than of a chronically unhappy lover. New sources of knowledge had opened up new themes and new visions of reality, and the new poet was obliged to bring his new sensitivity to bear on them. Any other course would have been utterly unrealistic

I have talked at some length about the nature of our traditional poetry so that you would understand the nature of the "revolt" of the new poet against it. This new spirit in Urdu poetry was inevitable, as much as it was inevitable in the poetry of any other language. It simultaneously threw up three poets, who in their different ways sought to interpret modern life. Míraji made bold experiments with form, brought the language of poetry closer to everyday speech, and unravelled some of the mysteries of the subconscious in the light of the new psychoanalytical discoveries; Faiz, using most of the traditional clichés, symbols and myths, even as Iqbál had done, evinced a new emotional response to current human problems in line with the socialist doctrine; and I, in my small way, experimenting with new rhyme arrangements, tried to stress some of the current problems, the foremost among them for me being the alien rule, religious dogmatism, moral repressions, etc., which had continuously dwarfed the Asian soul; and to achieve this, I drew upon my personal experience alone, rather than the experience of others or on any ulterior doctrine

Since we three began to write, a large number of other poets have carried forward the new trends in different measure - some stressing the form, some the diction, some the content. But, while the *ghazal* still lingers, the efforts of the new poets have largely rid Urdu poetry, even the *ghazal*, of most of its traditional trappings, giving it a new lease on life, a fresh air to breathe in and a courage to explore new paths.

Without any attempt to provide a solution for them, I have tried to respond to the modern Asian's problems, both emotionally and intellectually, through an esthetic and moral release from the past, even a rejection of it. The Progressives, as a rule, were not directly concerned with a breakaway from the past as such; and secondly, they insisted on a single-minded ideological

purpose of poetry, as a truth unarguable and evident. Some of my poems, both in *Máwara* (That Which Is Beyond), the first collection, and in *Irán mê Ajnabí* (A Stranger in Iran), the second collection, have no doubt some points of resemblance in their content with the poetry of the Progressives; but the main point of difference lies in our approach to life and its problems.

While they stood for a complete suspension of choice on the part of the writer, in favor of a preconceived doctrine, I believed that a poet who is honest to his craft, must write in the light of his individual perceptions alone. My poetry is not devoid of a personal ideology and an intense sensitivity to human situation, but it is not linked to any political doctrine imposed from outside. While the Progressives had a single yardstick to measure every human situation, I preferred to react to them in the light of my personal experience and the sense of values born out of that experience. I believe that reality has more than one shade, and their reflection in literature must depend entirely on a writer's own super-sensibility. The most manifest streak of my poetry is thus the confidence in individual perception, even in the aberrant, erratic self of man, which, I think, more than his righteous self can provide answers to human questions.

Furthermore, unlike the poetry of Faiz, there is no profusion of sensuous effects in my poetry, because I feel that such effects either distract from the main theme or obscure the reader's vision. Also, unlike Alí Sardár Jáfrí, another well-known Progressive poet, I neither harangue, nor preach; nor do I indulge in common sentimentalism, as many lesser Progressive poets did. I try to achieve my communication through concrete images contained within a poetic substance. Some poems, particularly those about Iran during the War, were even deliberately bare and austere in comparison with the poetry of Faiz and a few others.

As regards your question about the Western influences on my poetry, I suppose many writers of my generation could not avoid them: in fact, it is surprising that we could retain some of the Eastern influences! It is difficult to say which of the Western poets influenced me most, and even more difficult to say why. I do not claim any special erudition in Western poetry, but I have nibbled at many English poets, and at some European poets in their English translations. Ironically, though, the Western poets I have read the most have influenced me the least. It is, therefore, a wrong presumption that in order to get to the meaning of a poet, one should first examine his reading list. The Western influences on our society and literature did not enter through Western literature alone: the movies, the radio, the newspapers, and most of all the Western system of education, played a large role in our personalities and our way of thinking and thus our literary creations. All this brought about a new consciousness among us which went a long way towards transforming our classical oriental sensitivity into a modern, rather semi-Western sensitivity. I cannot blame any Western poets for my failings. I just had them.

Mahfil: Your works, particularly *Máwara*, have come under fire from the Progressive camp. What is the nature of their criticism of your works?

Mr. Rāshed: The criticism of the Progressives against my poetry largely stemmed from my independent attitude towards literature and life, but most of their criticism was based on certain poems in my second collection, *Irān mēn Ajnabī*, rather than exclusively on poems in *Māvara*. It is difficult to believe that in my condemnation of alien rule, or moral and social repression and of religious dogmatism, the Progressives did not discover some elements in their own way of thinking. In fact, until the publication of the second collection, in which I had criticized some of their most cherished idols, many Progressives even claimed me as one of them. But, they soon realized that I was not talking in their terms, nor in their language. Some of the poems in *Māvara* and many in *Irān mēn Ajnabī* were outspokenly opposed to the Progressive thought; in these I had read tendencies towards totalitarianism and regimentation. It was thus inevitable that I should become *persona non grata* with them as a group and make it easier for them to lash me for my other failings. Yet, it goes to their credit as well as my own, that our friendship has always continued on an individual basis.

Beginning with Krishan Chandar, who had otherwise contributed a useful introduction to *Māvara*, many dubbed me as "escapist." Krishan was at least generous enough to call it a "negative escapism," implying that it was a kind of "strategic retreat" on my part in order to continue the "fight." But other Progressive "critics" conveniently dropped the qualifying word. Even Krishan Chandar's verdict was based on four or five poems, particularly *Raqs* (A Dance), *Bekarān Rāt ke Lannāte Mēn* (In the Endless Silence of a Boundless Night), and *Khudkushī* (Suicide).

Now these poems were no escapist poems at all in the sense that they were neither autobiographical (in spite of the use of the first person singular), nor were they intended to provide any justification for escapism. At their worst, they were dramatic monologues, in the manner of Browning, let us say, which, in voicing the thoughts or describing the plight of three escapists of different type, were designed to bring out the sadness of escapism. To describe an "evil" is not to adore it. They were thus a part of the grotesqueness of the Indian situation under an alien rule, partly to show loss of man's communication with nature, as in *Raqs;* and partly to point out the breakdown of esthetic and spiritual values, as in *Intiqām* (Revenge) and in *Khudkushī*, in which an office worker's routine rapport with existence ends up in an abrupt disillusionment; and even the breakdown of sexual communication, as in *Bekarān Rāt ke Sannāte Mēn* These poems and others must be read as a unified metaphor of the Indian life in those days, when the alien rule was corroding our souls, and social and moral repressions all around us were stunting our spiritual growth.

Another point of criticism of my poetry was related to its style and diction. Some critics, both Progressive and non-Progressive, have regarded my poetry largely esoteric, and have found my expression ambiguous, even obscure. One reason for this perhaps is that I was not born to the Urdu language, my mother tongue being Panjābī. For me the problem of language is thus nearly the same as it must have been for Joseph Conrad, let us say. When you are not born to a language and have to use it for your literary expression, you often miss the colloquial flavor. I received most of my education in Persian

and Arabic, and it was but natural for me to be influenced by these two languages, which have many common features with Urdu; but their excessive use in an Urdu work can easily render it beyond the reach of the common man. Another, and to me more plausible, reason for this obscurity was the intensely personal nature of my experience, which expressed itself without the usually familiar trappings of Urdu poetry. I would have indeed been more easily "understood" if I had talked in terms of the clichés of Urdu poetry. Still another reason could be my own inability to find the right word for the right poetic thought. I do not rule out an occasional breakdown of communication on my part.

A few other critics, again from both groups, have discovered elements of "obscenity" in my poetry. I look upon obscenity as a problem of the moralist or the judge, rather than of the creative writer. Yet, except for *Intiqám*, there is hardly a poem in my two collections which would be morally or legally reprehensible. Even in that poem there are no four-letter words. As I have said earlier, in my poems I talk of love in terms of normal, natural love between man and woman, and in order to do so, I occasionally use imagery verging on sensuality. Indeed, one of my points of departure from the tradition was the freedom to treat themes of love in an unihibited manner and as a healthy passion - as against the morbid, unattainable desire of the traditional poet. I am no believer in mysticism or in a hypocritical camouflage of emotions, as the traditionalists were, and as even some of the Progressives are. Love in my poetry is desirable and attainable. Nevertheless, in a part of the world where even the word "kiss" is tabooed for all practical purposes, it is not impossible to find obscenity in the slightest show of emotion and the minutest reference to physical love.

Such criticism as I have just mentioned does not disconcert me, because I feel that it is at least honest and justifiable. But there have been and are critics who are either ignorant or dishonest or dogmatic in their approach to poetry. For example, Hayátullah Ansári, possibly a Progressive, published a full-fledged book on my poetry some twenty years ago and with an amateur, rudimentary knowledge of modern psychoanalysis, he was at pains to unearth psychological complexes - sadism, masochism, Oedipus complex, and so on and so forth.

Another young critic, in a completely irrelevant reference to my poetry in an essay on Akbar Allahábádi, ruled out my poetry as "soulless" and a "complete farce" - a harsh view, which if not dishonest and prejudiced, must be regarded as perfunctory. Still another critic, who is notorious for his dogmatic and astounding views on poetry without being a poet of any consequence himself, said, "Urdu *ghazal* is a semi-barbaric form of poetry," etc., and he lashed at my poems for an imagined lack of brevity and coherence and ridiculed every word used by me, while he had himself failed to read those poems in a coherent manner and had missed the nuances of many words. Such critics exist in all languages, and Urdu is no exception.

On the other hand, there are critics like Dr. Wazír Ágha, who made a brilliant study of the elements of revolt in my poetry; or Aftáb Ahmad, who in two serial articles analyzed my themes; or Salím Ahmad, who in his book

Naé Naam Aur Púra Ádami (New Verse and the Complete Man), proved how, in rejecting the traditional romanticism, I had sought man's fruition in physical love, and how love in my poetry was the search for the harmony of what he called "the upper and lower parts of the body," against the traditional poet's love which strove to destroy both.

Mahfil: What is the nature of your criticism of the Progressives? Do you think that they have outlived their effectiveness?

Mr. Rāshed: The Progressive movement in Urdu began some thirty years ago with the publication of a "Manifesto" by a small group of young Urdu writers in London. This was followed by the publication in India of a collection of short stories, *Angáré* (Sketches, or Hot Coals?), contributed by some dozen writers. This book was banned forthwith, because it was considered to contain many "obscenities" and its attitude towards religion was flagrantly offensive. In spite of this, I must say, the book did not create much sensation. If at all, it should have been banned for its banalities rather than for "obscenities."

The Progressives had basically two aims in view: firstly, to write for and on behalf of the proletariat, rather than for the élite; and, secondly, to use literature for creating hatred against the upper classes, feudal lords, and the clergy. The early writings of the Progressives failed to make any profound impression on our literature, because, I guess, some of the giants of Urdu literature, such as Ghálib, Hálí and Iqbál, had already brought about a revolution in thought, which was too strong at the time to yield to any other influence. Nevertheless, gradually, a group of writers, who were influenced by the Marxist ideology as preached by the Progressives, began to emerge and to receive encouragement and approval. A Progressive Writers' Association was formed, and a group of publishers found that the literature produced by these writers enjoyed ready market, especially among young readers who were looking for shocks and sensations.

I have never been a member of the Progressive Writers' Association, but, as I said earlier, have had very close relations with many Progressives individually. As you would recall, I dedicated my first collection to Faiz, and when his first collection, *Naqsh-e-Faryádí* was published, I contributed an introduction to it. Then, Krishan Chandar wrote an introduction to my first collection, *Máwará*. Upindar Náth Ashk, who is not a writer of the same calibre as Krishan Chandar, and is perhaps only a half Progressive, dedicated one of his novels to me.

My criticism of the Progressives springs from the view that literature is not and should not be produced under external direction, to serve a specified ideology or a specified group. In fact, dictating the course of literature through party manifestos always dismays me. To me it means that a certain group of people, whose *bona fides* are not clear to me, have taken it upon themselves to tell me what to write and how to write it, so that my literary productions may serve their purpose, however laudable.

This is to me a denial of my freedom to write, even of my freedom to think for myself. This makes "Progressivism" a misnomer; for literature, in order to contribute to human sublimation and progress, spiritual progress if you like to call it that, must be written under conditions of utmost freedom. No politician is wise enough to lay down the course of a writer's thoughts and emotions to others. I do not value anything more than the ability to view and interpret the world around me and life as a whole, if I wish to, and to react to human problems in their universal context or in my personal context, as I may choose. In so far as the Progressives strove to draw writers out of their cocoons, and stressed that they must have a social responsibility beyond their normal literary responsibility, the Progressives served a useful purpose, for literture and life are interrelated, and one cannot exist without the other. Literature cannot be created in a vacuum and cannot exist to serve a vacuum. But, in so far as they preached that the writer had no personal will and he must suspend his choice like characters in a melodrama, they aimed at creating literature to fit a pattern. Thus, I have no quarrel with the Progressives in so far as they believe that literature should reflect a social consciousness, but I do differ with them when this social consciousness in their view must be completely impersonal. This is indeed the denial of the whole creative process and of the *raison d'être* of all creative activity.

Nevertheless, among the Progressives there are good writers and there are bad writers; there are those who perceive life in its entirety, and those who miss it completely; there are those who bring new wisdom to bear on their interpretation of man's destiny, and those whose finer senses are blinded by slogans; there are those who sublimate as well as edify, and those who merely harangue. This, however, provides no criterion for judging what you call their "effectiveness," or for finding out whether they have outlived it or not.

The effectiveness of the Progressives, in my view, lies in the "proliferation" of their movement, because it is as a consequence of their movement that writers today, even many *ghazal*-writers, cannot afford to close their eyes to their social environment and to the problems of man as a whole. No doubt, the Progressives did not succeed in lining up every writer to promote the Marxist doctrine or the cause of the proletariat, as they saw it; but their movement has gradually spread enough consciousness of the existing human situation that any writer today who wishes to write for himself alone or to indulge in self-pity or a morbidly personal nostalgia, must feel a sense of guilt in doing so. It was more than a coincidence that the two movements in Urdu, one for the change of form and idiom and the other for the change of content, arose together and then converged to produce the "new" writer of today.

Today, it is no longer fashionable for anyone to call himself a "Progressive," with a sense of superiority, or to dub anyone a "Reactionary" in an obviously derogatory sense. Today, no writing can produce much echo unless it is directly or indirectly related to the life of the people. At the same time, there is a growing resistance to the theory that literture can be dictated, and many writers have successfully defied all pressures from outside groups trying to direct them. Most theorists among the Progressives have gone the way of all theorists; the few who linger are often a little apologetic about their "Manifesto" and about the production *Angâré*, written directly to prove the dicta of the "Manifesto."

Mahfil: Would you care to comment on the poetry of Faiz Ahmad Faiz, who is generally considered the foremost Progressive poet, and whom you mentioned as one of the three pioneers of modern Urdu poetry? How did the Urdu literary community react to his winning the Lenin Peace Prize in 1962? What were your personal reactions?

Mr. Rashed: Beginning with my introduction to Faiz's first collection, a great deal has been written on his poetry. While the old masters of Urdu verse, Jósh Malíhábádí and Hafíz Jallandhari are still alive and prospering, Faiz remains the most popular Urdu poet today who, after Iqbál, is the best known abroad.

My opinion that "Faiz stands at the junction of romanticism and realism," which I expressed some twenty-five years ago, still largely holds true. Faiz has inherited the wistfulness and sadness of the disappointed lover of the traditional *ghazal* in a large measure (this may be one reason why he feels very much at home in the *ghazal* form); and, to this, I presume, must have been added some influence of the English romantic poets, particularly Shelley and Keats, (who were a part of our discipline at the University), because they seem to have left a clear mark on his imagery. His soft sentimentalism and his repeated reference to "pain" immediately remind one of the two great English romantic poets. From the Persian and Urdu *ghazal*, he has borrowed the whole complex of symbolism, myth and even phraseology which, in spite of his apparent contemporary consciousness, render him a mystic in line with Háfiz and Saadí, who were no less conscious of their own immediate environment.

But, in using the traditional parlance, he does not always seek his personal catharsis alone, as the traditional poet did. His method is to awaken first within himself and then in the mind of his reader a pain and pathos which would link his experience with the experience of mankind as a whole. Thus, he enables the time-worn clichés of the Persian and Urdu *ghazal* to acquire a renewed sensitivity and to be recharged with meaning, so that the solitary suffering of the disappointed romantic lover is transformed into the suffering of humanity at large. The traditional poet was often a mere lonely prowler, but Faiz stalks his quarry, using the same old weapons of the *ghazal*-writer, with a clear awareness of a multitude behind him. This explains his constant reference, even appeal, to "comrades" and "friends" in his poetry.

The symbols of wine and the tavern, which were used by the traditional poet to express "spiritual ecstacy" or the state of communion with the spiritual leader or with the Divine Being, are in Faiz's poetry the symbols of the new urge and the new aspirations of man; the allusion to the Cross, which in old poetry represented the personal affliction of the lover, is the suffering and sacrifice of the common man for a supreme cause. In the *ghazal*, the cruel, indifferent beloved was referred to as a "murderer;" in Faiz's poetry, this beloved, the murderer, is frequently the constantly illusory goal of struggling humanity, or the persecutors of the new crusader - the colonial rules, repressive laws, the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms etc., etc. There is no special emphasis in Faiz's poetry on sex, but he constantly employs many sex symbols - eager red eyes, snow-white bodies, tall feminine figure, smiling lips, etc. - which lend an element of "juiciness" to his poetry where no subtle political meaning is intended.

Faiz is a Progressive poet, no doubt, but what distinguishes him from the ordinary Progressive is that he has not turned his poetry to serve a functional purpose. He does not directly cater to the proletariat, and does not indulge in the usual oratorical outbursts of the Progressives. His images are largely ornate, but together they combine to create a single emotional experience. By retaining the familiar symbolism and phraseology of the *ghazal*, he has facilitated his approach to the reader, which the other Progressives would perhaps achieve either by using the idiom of everyday speech, or by more direct expression, or by simple oratory.

Faiz approaches his reader at two levels at the same time: the level of the ordinary lyrical poet, with a direct emotional appeal; and the level of a socially conscious poet, in terms of a political metaphor. His reader has thus to make a slight mental adjustment to arrive at the underlying meaning of his poetry, particularly when Faiz's poetry is not a poetry of intensely subtle personal experience, which the ordinary reader would find difficult to share with him.

As the time goes, however Faiz is becoming increasingly repetitive, and his poetry which in the past only echoed some of the traditional emotions in traditional phrases, now echoes itself back and forth. The themes have begun to circle around one another, and the silky words in which they were clad have become even fluffier. His technique of lulling his reader into a euphoria, by the use of constantly repeating sensuous effects so that he might see the visions of man's future, has turned his poetry into an extravaganza which is beginning to weaken its impact. Unless Faiz permits a widened personal experience, a renewed understanding of human psychological processes and a new philosophical outlook on life to refertilize his poetry, my feeling is that it might turn into a paper-white narcissus or calendar art!

I am afraid I am not aware of the reactions of the Urdu literary community to Faiz's winning of the Lenin Peace Prize. I, however, imagine that it must have been a mixed one. While many must have felt proud that a poet of the Urdu language was thus honored, some must have inevitably looked upon it as a political award. I personally do not believe in literary awards and prizes: the greatest awards for a writer are the freedom to write and the creation of such social and political conditions as would enable him to reach the largest number of readers in unfettered freedom. Literary prizes do not essentially lead to better creativity; in fact, often they lead to a complaisance on the part of the writer thus honored. Some official and para-official prizes even have an element of regimentation, and are motivated by a desire to corrupt writers, to line them up with a political ideology to the exclusion of any independent thought in the name of common survival. It is unfortunately often difficult to perceive this influence.

Mahfil: Another figure who, like yourself, is - or rather, was - highly influential in Urdu poetry, and like yourself a spearhead of modern Urdu poetry, but also not a Progressive, was Mírají. What do you think of his works? How would you describe his influence on the most recent poets?

Mr. Rashed: I have so far gone along with you in making a distinction between "Progressive" and "non-Progressive" poetry, but I suppose we have now reached a parting of the ways on this. This distinction is all too artificial and perfunctory, and I believe that it merely serves the purpose of camouflaging the political intent of a certain type of poetry in order to mislead the naïve. To call poetry "communist" or "leftist," which this type of poetry in fact is, would have naturally limited the desired psychological impact. I believe that any poet who represents modern consciousness, in one way or the other, is Progressive, and thus Mírají, whose themes originated in certain aspects of modern life, must rank as a Progressive above all. Considering, however, that over a period of time, the leftists have themselves modified their stance over many poets, including Ghálib and Iqbál, I have reasons to be optimistic that Mírají too would some day be included among their ranks. It would not help Mírají, but it might enrich the Progressives.

I look upon Mírají as the most remarkable poet of our time - most ingenious, most prolific, most individualistic - and the most maligned. The leftists rejected him outright, investing him with all the sinister qualities which he never possessed - negativism, defeatism, morbidity, eroticism, obscenity, ambiguity, etc., etc. All this because there was no drumfire in his poetry to advance the leftist cause, or any cause, for that matter.

Mírají was, in the first instance, a poet who gave up formal prosodic devices, not for the sake of mere experimentation, or for a conscious breakaway from the past, or to *appear* new and modern, but because his subject-matter demanded an entirely new structural basis. Without a freedom in lining, diction, and the deployment of language in general, which is possible in free verse alone, he could not have turned his abstractions into the vivid pictures and sensations that enrich his poetry. Also he employed the dramatic monologue technique extensively, using the first person singular for the character portrayed in each poem. Careless critics have interpreted his poems - as well as some of mine, as I said earlier - as mere autobiographical accounts, forgetting that the special advantage of the dramatic monologues is that they enable the poet to stand at a convenient distance from his characters, without identifying himself with any one and without getting involved in their "affairs."

Undoubtedly, Mírají's dramatic monologues were born out of the complex of his own personal experience, as much as all poetry is, and also represented his individual philosophy of life. But accusing him of a penchant for personal experiences for erotic purposes is doing him less than justice. Since his purpose was never to persuade or to arouse any intense emotional reactions, and in talking of sex he even talked *sotto voce*, almost stifling his voice under highly personal covert symbolism, it is wicked to say that he was morbidly obsessed by sexual themes or was deliberately obscene. Although his poetry is rich in sensuous effects, he scrupulously avoided the ornamental trappings of the conventional verse, on the one hand, and even the semblance of sensationalism, on the other. There are no extravagant sex scenes in his poetry, and while sex no doubt was his principle subject for poetry, he does not evoke any voluptuous responses, as, for example does the poetry of Jósh Malihábádi, a more or less officially recognized Progressive, nor does he indulge in juicy words and phrases, even like Faiz. He does not use any rhetorical devices to dazzle the reader, as Ali Sardár Jáfri does;

and his language is so close to its Hindi genus, as well as to modes of common speech, that, except for the subtlety of his symbolism, he is far closer to the proletariat than any "Progressive" poet.

There is also no morbidity in his treatment of sex or its various aberrations. Fundamentally convinced as he was that the secretiveness and the prudery surrounding sex were at the root of the disintegration of modern man, or so-called civilized man, his poetry was an attempt at delivering man of the filth and ugliness and vice which his subconscious had accumulated over the ages. Mírají's poetry is a protest against the havoc which moralism has played with the spirit of man, turning his subconscious into a mere "ghostland." His poetry is not moralistic, of course, in the established sense of the word, yet in so far as it challenges the hazards of conventional moralism, it is an attempt at remoralization of man. In order to save man from any further disintegration, he calls him back to himself and to Nature, where his primitive self used to be. In one of his essays, Mírají has viewed this inner disintegration of man as the root-cause of the present-day international tensions and conflicts, which lead to great wars - thus justifying his own crusade against it. But, he was no poet of crusades, conscious, pre-planned crusades, which are the pastime of the leftist writers alone.

His poetry symbolizes the eternal quest of Man, as a pilgrim and not as a citizen, for the discovery of the lost Self, through a renewed rapport with himself, a harmony within and without. It is thus no matter of surprise that he draws most of his symbols from Nature - the sea and the clouds, brooks and fountains, hillocks and mounds, forests and gardens, trees and wind, etc; and for his imagery he reverts to the ancient India of Krishna and the *gopis*, its dark forest nights, caves, temples, witches, ghosts and cobras - the days when Man, in his primitive existence, was closer to Nature, and thus to himself, than he is today.

Yet, psychological complexes as a problem of the modern man are his favorite subject, and he uses them to illustrate how modern civilization, the super-creator and nurturer of these complexes, has reduced man to a mere fraction of himself. Sex, which is the symbol of man's whole existence, can, in his view, resile and sting back like a cobra when an attempt is made to cover it under the lids of romanticism, platonic love, or hypocritical moralism.

It is true that many readers still find it difficult to understand Mírají's poetry, for his poetry cannot be measured by the normal conventional standards, nor by any preconceived notions about the purpose and place of poetry in life. Some knowledge of modern psychology and, more than that, some respect for the great discoveries made by Freud and other great psychologists of our times on the relation of sex and the subconscious, are indeed necessary to build a response to this unusual poetry. Undoubtedly, Mírají always writes from intensely personal experience, but in poems like *Sumandar ka Bulawa* (The Call of the Sea), *Uncha Makán* (A Tall Building), *Chal-chalão* (The Passing Show), *Ek thí Aurat* (There was a Woman), etc., this experience transcends beyond the poet's person and is immediately linked with the spiritual destiny of the modern man, which is the attainment of complete harmony with Nature and himself, more with himself than with Nature, to save himself from disintegration and death.

While many younger poets, among them Ziá Jallandhari, Mukhtár Siddíqí, Majíd Amjad, Muhammad Safdar and others, most of them members of Halqa-e-Arbab-e-Zauq, of which Mírají was the founder, share Mírají's method and technique in different measure, particularly the use of run-over lines, his rhythmic patterns, his preoccupation with mythology, and his independent spirit, few of them possess his super-sensitivity, his peculiar philosophy of life, or his dexterity in the treatment of sexual themes within an intricate pattern of symbols and images. For single-minded moralists, Mírají will perhaps always remain a security hazard, and will always be kept out of the textbooks by the virtuous schoolmen, but his impact on Urdu poetry will always be keenly felt.

Rakhshí: You have said that Mírají was, among his other great qualities, the founder of Halqa-e-Arbáb-e-Zauq, which, I understand, means "The Circle of Men of Taste," and which is supposed to have stood for the independent spirit of the writer. What is your opinion of this society? What do you think of its recent tendency to function as the apologists for the Islamic religion in an Islamic state? Isn't it rather unusual for an "art for art's sake" school of literature to transform itself into a school of religious apologetics?

Mr. Rashed: I have always held Halqa-e-Arbáb-e-Zauq, or Halqa for short, in the highest esteem. I was closely associated with it when it was first founded in Delhi some twenty-five years ago, more or less as a substitute for the so-called Delhi Cultural Society, which I had rather unsuccessfully tried to form with a similar purpose - the independence of the writer - but to be comprised of writers in all the available languages. Mírají wisely saw that it was difficult to bring writers of different languages together under the same roof, particularly those of Urdu and Hindi. He, therefore, concentrated on a society which would be devoted to the cause of the Urdu language and literature alone, and thus succeeded in forming the Halqa.

I look upon the Halqa as a society of what one may call "the well-rounded men of Urdu letters," as against the men of letters cut to a measure; men who believe that the cause of literature is best served by a writer who under all circumstances is willing to maintain his spirit of independence, and who does not sacrifice his individuality for the sake of a political creed externally imposed upon him, or for any political expediency. It is, therefore, a mistake to take Halqa for a mere "art for art's sake" school in the sense of an Ivory Tower. While retaining their independent spirit, members of the Halqa have at all times shown vital interest in life and its problems, and have according to their individual lights, reflected them in their literary productions.

The doors of the Halqa have indeed been kept open to all varieties of writers and writings - esthetic, leftist, religious, mystical, traditional, modern, and so on and so forth - as long as it happened to be good literature. The society has many special features: it has no regular president, no permanent executive, no membership fee and no business office. Everything is done on an *ad hoc* basis: the president is nominated for each meeting; an executive

is formed when needed; members are individually called upon to subscribe when a specific program needs financial support: and the private house or office of a member may be "requisitioned" as business office for a specific transaction. More than that, the Society has never sought official favors or monetary help, and has seldom cared for or received an official frown - except perhaps once, when its Ráwalpindi chapter was ordered closed down because it was felt that the weekly meetings were being crowded by political extremists. Despite this, the Halqa has functioned well for these twenty-five odd years, with its Lahore chapter having proved the most active, while the other ones in Delhi, Karáchi, Ráwalpindi, Pesháwar, Dacca and London, operating rather spasmodically.

One must, however, admit that the record of the Halqa's accomplishments has stayed all too on the humble side: regular Sunday afternoon meetings, which to this day follow the same pattern as laid down by the illustrious founder; annual meetings, accompanied by a *mushá'ara* (poetical symposium) attended by special invitation; a rather sporadic publication of "annual" poetry selections - to which have lately been added similar selections of short stories, essays and discussions.

What lends the Halqa its intrinsic worth is not its output, but its emphasis on modernity in literature, its encouragement of all experimentation, and its inveterate "weakness" for free and frank criticism. One rule of the game which the Halqa has scrupulously observed throughout its existence has been that no writer, however great or influential, who cares to present his work in any of the Halqa's meetings, will be spared criticism and that that criticism will be honest and objective. This rule has no doubt chagrined many an established writer who is accustomed to solicitous compliments or polite comments, which are common in my part of the world; but has, on the other hand, turned the Halqa into a training ground for the younger writer who must inevitably get some "spanking" from his seniors before he can either realize his worth or fall by the roadside.

As regards the second part of your question, frankly, I am not aware of any somersault on the Halqa's part: in fact, such somersaults somehow do not fit into its pattern at all. How could it ever, as an organization, become one thing or the other? As I have already pointed out, it is not right to take the Halqa for a mere Ivory Tower, because it has at all times shown a dynamic interest in life and its problems. But, it cannot, at the same time ever go to the extent of issuing a "manifesto" calling upon all its members, to write on one theme or the other; or in one way or the other, for the simple reason that this would not fit into its pattern of approach to literature. Much less would it call upon its members to become apologists for Islam or for any purpose for that matter.

I can well imagine that some members of the Halqa, as well as certain other writers, today write on Islamic themes, and whether they do so as apologists or not, it is their own business. Islam, after all, is an important dimension of the life of an average Pakistani. The majority of Pakistan's population is Muslim. The country has inherited a culture which has its roots in the Islamic way of life. Thus if a writer views life from the Islamic angle, he is only reflecting life the way it appears to him. When you say apologists for the Islamic religion, I hope that you do not mean religious fanatics, because that would indeed be a disaster. Otherwise, if a Pakistani writer treats Islam, let us say, in the same manner as scores of Western writers

from Dante and Milton down to T. S. Eliot, have treated Christianity, it does not amount to an apologia for Islam. There are references to Christian lore even in the poetry of Auden and Dylan Thomas in English; and in Urdu we have already writers like Hálí, Akbar and Iqbál, who have written directly about Islam, while no Urdu poet of the past has written poetry without allusions to Islamic myths.

It is not clear to me what you base your conclusion on, when you say that the Halqa has transformed itself into a school of religious apologists. I am aware that there are quite a few Urdu poets today who draw upon Islam for their themes - Islamic religion or civilization or history. For example, Jílaní Kámran, who has introduced a neo-romantic attitude towards Islam, a certain kind of wistfulness for Islamic personalities and places, with such poems as *Panjsúra-wálá* (The Colporteur), or the poems in which there are extensive references to Fátima, the Prophet's daughter, or even some of his poems directly inspired by the Indo-Pakistan conflict of September 1965; or Mukhtár Siddíqí, whose *Sḥarfí* (Poem of Thirty Letters) is an attempt at reinterpreting Islamic mysticism, and whose other poems have a close bearing on Islamic civilization and its different facets; or all those poets who several years ago brought out a spate of "war poetry" - partly patriotic, partly religious.

I admit that this last variety of poetry, which was not even a good apologia for Islam, mostly represented patriotic fervor or religious fury, and with the exception of Ahmad Faráz's poem, *Main kyún Udás Hún?* (Why Am I Sad?), which read a universal grief on the tragedy of Indo-Pakistan war, a grief which is of all mankind and which transcends national sentiments as well as national boundaries, there was hardly a good poem produced that year. Most of the other poems which I happened to read were oratorical outbursts poured out in hackneyed phrases. For instance Jáfar Táhir's long "war poem," which was in fact a series of poems, stood out for its lack of sincerity, for its mechanical use of torrential words, in the manner of the old *marsía* (elegy) writers, and for its overtones of religious frenzy. I am referring to these instances to show that even if you are "an apologist for the Islamic religion in an Islamic state," as you say, you have to be a good writer, first and last, and I trust that the Halqa has not decided to judge literature by any different standard. Nevertheless, these individual efforts which aimed at prevailing "Islamic" sentiments provide no indication that the Halqa has undergone any metamorphosis. I hopefully believe that its official policy still is and will always be to strive for unfettered independence of the writer.

Mahfúz. Your answer to my last question happily answers a part of the question which I was going to ask now. I would, however, like to have your views on this subject in some detail. What do you, then, think the ends of poetry ought to be, particularly from the point of view of a citizen of an Islamic state?

Mr. Rásid. I am afraid your question is based on certain presumptions which are not proven. When you ask what the ends of poetry ought to be, particularly from the point of view of a citizen of an Islamic state, you presume in the first instance that poetry *has* specified ends - ends which can be spelled out in advance; secondly, that ends of poetry, if there are any, must change

from place to place or that they must be geared to the policies and programs of a state; thirdly, that the point of view of a citizen of an Islamic state on matters of literature, must be different from that of a citizen of a non-Islamic state, and lastly that Pakistan - for we are talking of Pakistan in the context of Urdu poetry - is a state with an explicit religious denomination.

I am not sure, therefore, that I can handle this question to your entire satisfaction. Although it seems to me to be irrelevant to our discussion on the ends of poetry as such, we must get clear on the nature of Pakistan as a state. I would prefer to call it a Muslim state, rather than an Islamic state. A majority of its population professes the faith of Islam. Islam is the main cohesive force between its various regions and provides the moral basis and justification to its existence. The country has inherited a national culture, which is the product of a fusion of Arabic, Persian and Indian elements, which themselves were influenced by Islam in different measures. But to call it an Islamic state is to call it a theocratic state, which Pakistan does not claim to be. Religion is not practiced any the better or any the worse in Pakistan than in any other country of the world. The laws made by the State are related to religion only in their broad moral and social substance. More specifically, the Islamic penal code is not administered there.

But, I do not wish to stretch this point too far; for, as I said, it is largely irrelevant to our discussion on poetry. The main question to which we are seeking an answer is whether a poet owes any responsibility to the state of which he is the subject; and whether that state has any right to interfere with or influence literature in any way, irrespective of the nature of that state.

In the first instance, I believe that the ends of poetry do not and should not differ from country to country and state to state, and should not be geared to national political policies and programs, because national policies and programs are shifting sands, while it is in the nature of a poet's craft to follow more durable purposes of the wider humanity. Secondly, the people of one country, whether it is an Islamic state or not, are no different from the people of another, in so far as they all expect that their loves and hates, hopes and fears, sorrows and delights and weaknesses and strong points will be reflected in their poetry, and in so far as they all understand and enjoy poetry better when it draws for inspiration upon the elements in their culture with which they are most familiar and which they most cherish. I imagine that this is the normal pattern of response to poetry in all parts of the world, and an Islamic state - whatever that expression may mean - should be no exception. Thus, I consider it natural for a Pakistani poet - irrespective of the nature of Pakistan as a state - to reflect the life around him as it exists, or as he sees it, or as he may wish to see it. If religion or any other element of thought happens to be the predominant passion of the people of a country, it indeed becomes inevitable for its poets and writers to link their personal experience as well as their loves and hates, hopes and fears, with that passion, and to reflect it in their writings one way or the other.

This does not, however, mean that a poet, even if he lives in a country dominated by a single passion, cannot have his own vision - a vision of the future or a vision of things as they should be rather than of things as they are, a vision transcending his immediate national surroundings. A poet anywhere is indeed better-off when he can write more about a life that is to be, than about life as he finds it around him, because then he can create an illusion, which is the essence of all poetry. Yet, ironically enough, even a vision cannot take off from nowhere. All visions are rooted in the present and immediate reality - a fact that makes them vision, and thus worthwhile, is indeed this contrast with the present and immediate reality. Finally, on the nature of a poet's vision depends the relationship of the illusion and reality emerging from his poetry as well as its worthwhileness in the context of human values.

But who decides the nature of a poet's vision for him? Does he depend upon others, his friends, relatives, political groups, governments etc., to provide a ready-made vision? Or, is it manufactured in those invisible workshops of poetical inspiration which are beyond normal human reach? It is indeed in the nature of a poet's vision that it should be personal and individual, and that no other individual, however great or influential, no group, no state, should lay down rules for shaping that vision, for the simple reason that it then ceases to be a vision. It can be a political or social forecast based on the available data, but it cannot be a vision.

The poet is thus the sole architect of his own visions and must always remain so if he is to be honest to his craft, and if he cares to produce the best poetry that lies in him. Basically, a poet writes because he has the urge to do so; and that urge, in seeking expression, gathers a great deal of moss around it - the moss of all kinds of emotions and feelings and notions about life and its problems, notions about things past, present and future - it then dresses itself in words, and words begin to form rhythmic patterns, and acquire new meanings, often layers and layers of them, with all kinds of shades and colors, which make them powerful, and sometimes even deadly weapons. Deadly, indeed, because they are capable of engendering manifold emotional responses in others, which are further multiplied depending on the sensitivity of the recipient; and these responses are known to have led to strange actions.

Now, it is this action which many states are concerned about and even dread, the action resulting from what began as an innocent vision of an insignificant being, but soon transformed itself into words in a poem, and acquired a new meaning saturated with emotions, which created responses and reactions. At this stage, the state, acting in sheer self-preservation, steps in either to suppress the poet's vision or to mold it in a manner that it would no longer endanger social order as conceived by the custodians of the state, or the system of government established and nurtured by them. Thus the state feels even happier if the poet's vision would help preserve the social order and promote the political system for which it stands, rather than subvert it.

It then all depends on how immaculate a poet wishes his vision to stay, and how far he can go to resist the system which strives to suppress it or dilute it. The choice clearly rests with the poet himself, depending on the confidence he has in the truth underlying his vision, on his sense of responsibility to mankind, on his broad awareness of human destiny, as well as his

strength and ability to sustain his vision against all odds.

The subject of the freedom and responsibility of the writer has been discussed threadbare, and I am more or less repeating what others have said before. Still I do not imagine that I have provided you with a final answer to your question. The final answer is that there is no final answer. There are no ends of poetry, yet there are. There is no special point of view of a citizen of any state on poetry, yet there is. The states do not like to curb the freedom of the writer, yet they do. And so on and so forth. The situation is pretty well confused. Yet, I can say that I am clear about one thing in my own mind. No state, whatever its political denomination, has the right to tell a poet to talk about violets and stars, until it has created the conditions which make the violets bloom and the stars shine.

Mahfil: How would you describe the literary scene of West Pakistan today, particularly in the light of what you have just said? Who are the major talents among the younger generation, i.e., those who have made their debut since, say, 1951?

Mr. Râshed: I suppose in our discussion so far, we have already pretty well covered the literary scene of West Pakistan today. We have discussed at some length the leftist movement in Urdu literature which, for lack of an organization of its own, has more or less frittered away, and Halqa-e-Arbâb-e-Zauq, which is still functioning and, hopefully, still stands for the writer as independent spirit. We have as yet made no reference to the Writers' Guild, which came into being in 1959, under direct state encouragement and patronage with the declared object of "uniting Pakistani writers under the present regime for the greater glory of Pakistan." Whatever the nature of the Guild's affiliations and whatever its objectives may be, one remarkable achievement of this organization has been that it has brought writers of all denominations and beliefs under its wings, irrespective of the languages they use for their writings, and has thus opened the doors for a new dialogue between them.

With its resources far better than those of any other literary organization in the country, it has also launched an elaborate publications program. Furthermore, the Pakistani writer had never before seen so much "affluence," in the form of prizes and awards, as the Guild through its influence with the moneyed classes has made possible for him today. Some of the routine activities of the Guild have closely followed the pattern set by other literary societies, such as weekly meetings and occasional "Evenings with So-and-So." The Guild has also been promoting special sales of books autographed by the authors on the spot. It publishes a monthly magazine which is a kind of literary miscellany of poetry, fiction, criticism, and news of the literary world.

But, I imagine that I am going too far afield from your question, while without some mention of the Writers' Guild, the literary scene of Pakistan cannot be considered complete. I guess, you wanted to know about some of the more prominent contours of the literary scene of West Pakistan, particularly in the field of poetry; and besides what we have already gone over,

you are interested in the new generation of poets that has come into prominence since 1951. I do not understand the significance of this date, except that with this begins the second half of the present century!

Before we come to talk of this new generation, it might be useful to mention that there are still two eminent poets of the oldest generation flourishing, namely Jósh Malíhábádi and Hafíz Jallandhari - who are the antithesis of each other both in personality and poetry. We have little time to discuss their respective personalities, nor is it perhaps entirely germane to our present discussion. As far as their poetry goes, Jósh once wrote fervently patriotic and humanistic verse, but now at a ripe age, almost as an afterthought, seems to have become hopelessly nostalgic of his youthfully playful past; Hafíz, on the other hand, began as a poet of youthful lyrical exuberance, and is ending up as a religious revivalist - his magnum opus being *Shâhnáma-e-Islam* (a history of Islam in verse) - and as a patriotic poet who has permitted his talent to be extensively used by the Government for the exhortation of the people in general, and the armed forces in particular, to a realization of their national responsibilities.

Of the Progressives, we have talked in detail, particularly of Faiz and his poetry. As a supplementary note, it may be said here that there are a few others of them, who, for lack of a common platform, have got mixed up with the Writers' Guild and other literary societies, and most of them have ended up as kind of brinkmen. One of the more significant leftist poets, after Faiz, however is Ahmad Nadím Qásimí, who has retained his leftist fervor along with some objectivity in the treatment of his subjects. The most distinguishing feature of his poetry is an intense moral anguish felt over the contrast between the urban and rural way of life, and the social and economic exploitation of the peasant by the townsman. His poetry lacks drama and wit, but his speculations on the relationship of man and nature, man and God, and man and man, lend some philosophical strain to his verse. The conflict between the Muslim mind on the one hand and the communist ideology on the other, is very obvious in his poetry, but it has saved it from the usual leftist fanaticism. Among the younger leftist poets, one who has made a mark is Ahmad Faráz, who has succeeded much better than others in balancing sentimentalism with a broad humanism and an oriental sensitivity with Marxist ideology.

Among those who developed under the shadow of Mírají and Halqa-e-Arbáb-e-Zauq, the more prominent poets are Yúsuf Zafar, who has now turned what you like to call "an apologist for the Islamic religion," Qayyúm Nazar, Mukhtár Siddíqi, Ziá Jallandhari, Muhammad Safdar and Majíd Amjad, all representing what one may call the middle generation of the living Urdu poets. It is difficult in this brief discussion to go over their individual characteristics, but their common features are absolute individualism, subjectivity and intense preoccupation with the conflict between life and death and with nature, both as a creator and destroyer. Except for Mukhtár Siddíqí, who is a revivalist and a metaphysical poet, the rest of them show an original searching mind, constantly seeking a philosophical answer to the natural phenomenon in relation to man. While all these poets have more or less carried forward the tradition of the independent spirit, they

have also been accused of maintaining a blissful non-involvement in the current human scene in their search for the larger human question. Consequently they ignore the problems both in their immediate society and beyond it. Some of them now seem to be "compensating" for this non-involvement by writing about the conflict of a few years ago.

Now, coming to the more recent generation of Urdu poets who have appeared on the scene during the last ten or fifteen years, in spite of their own claim that they are in revolt against everything that has gone before, they are by and large the followers of the traditions laid down by Mírají and his immediate followers. Whatever the nature of their revolt, I consider it most encouraging that a group of poets has arisen with a courage to challenge some of the existing rules of poetry and to provide a new appraisal of them in the light of their personal experience.

The main purpose of poetry, as stated by some of their apologists, is the personal delectation of the reader. Poetry, according to them, must entertain before it can sublimate or edify, and this alone can guarantee that whatever they write will eventually join the mainstream of literature and civilization. They believe in no tradition, although some of them have advocated the revival of the *ghazal* form, and they believe that no ethical values, religious concepts or philosophical thought can compensate for the basic purpose of poetry - enjoyment. Most of them use the language of common speech, so that the distance between the poet and the reader be minimized, and some of them have succeeded in this admirably well too, one of them being Mádho, who has written little so far, but has already shown a startling gift of observation and wit; yet, his poetry is not devoid of a thought-pattern, in so far as he has written brilliant satires against humanism. There is an extensive tendency among them to write symbolically, and to draw their symbols from the so-called "dream world," which often hampers their communication; for dreams, in spite of their roots in the world of reality, have an intimately personal character and their dimensions are in a constant state of fluidity.

This newly emerging poetry still largely remains low key, but the signs of revolt in it are self-evident. It is a challenge to the humanism of both the Marxists and the oriental metaphysicists, to the wistful sentimentalism of Akhtar Shiráni and of Faiz, to the intellectualism of Iqbál and Ghálib, and to both the former esthetic poets and the poets of social responsibility. In many of the new poems, one can read a passion for life and for human civilization, but without any sense of the acceptance of responsibility for either. Some of the poets of the new generation, such as Zafar Iqbál, Akhtar Ahsan, and Mádho, whom I mentioned earlier, are gifted with extraordinary human understanding, and thus it is surprising that they tend to treat life as a mere passing show.

Another poet, Iftikhár Jálib, who is endowed with a vision of human civilization, still keeps his mind separated from normal human concerns. Poets like Munir Niázi, Síqí Fárúqí and Anís Nágí are largely victims of self-love, and the scenes of violence and fear which they portray can only lead to a sordid view of life, born out of neurotic minds. They are basically poets of a disorder which threatens the ruin of civilization, rather than poets of a new order which would replace the existing chaos. Their poetry is the poetry

of what one may call "the social subconscious mind," as against the poetry of Mírají, who drew his images and symbols from the subconscious mind of the individual.

The age of grand poetry has passed away in Pakistan, as it has in other parts of the world. The poetry of the new generation of Urdu poets has considerably reduced its weight. What they are writing today is largely chatty and frivolous, but one may hope that when their present mood of self-assertion at any cost passes away, more solid and sturdy works may emerge.

NINE POEMS

Translated from the Urdu by Carlo Coppola and M. U. K. Qureshi

N. M Rashed

Near the Balcony*

Wake up, winsome bedroom's light;
Wake up from your bed of velvet dreams,
Though you still cling to night's delight.
Come to this window;
Morning's lights
Caress minarets
Whose heights
Mirror my desires.
Open those drowsy eyes
That awaken love in my heart;
Look at the minarets
Basking in the dawn.
Do you recall beneath their shadows
A shabby *mullah*
Drowsing in a dark basement,
Like his idle god,
A demon, sorrowful,
A sign of a three-hundred-year shame,
A shame without cure?
Look: as if jungle spirits with torch in hand
Had left their lairs to prowl,
The crowd in the market rushes madly --
Like a flood.
Somewhere, in each of these men's hearts
Flickers -- bride-like --
A spark of soul.
But not one has the power to burst
Into a raging flame.
Among them wallow the diseased, the poor,
Nourishing cruelty beneath the sky.
I am only a beast of burden, tired, old,
Oh whom Hunger, hefty and strong, rides;
And as other city folk
After passing a night of pleasure,
I too go out to pick up rags and trash

*This poem and the following are reprinted from *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, Contemporary Asian Poetry, A Chapbook, XIII, 2 (Winter, 1962-63): 48-50.

Beneath that fickled sky.
At night, I too return to a shack.
Look at my helplessness!
Again and again I return to this window
To look at the minarets
When evening gives them a departing kiss.

N. M. Rashed

Introductions

Translated from the Urdu by Carlo Coppola and M. H. K. Qureshi

Death, meet them,
These simple-hearted who
Neither pray nor drink,
Who are neither artful nor worldly-wise,
Who have learning
Of neither books nor of machines,
Of neither this world nor another.
Merely faithless in all things.
Don't be shy, Death;
Meet them.

Come ahead; you also, come ahead
To meet Death.
Come, you new rich;
Don't bother to hide your begging bowls;
There is no life in you now, slaves of Mammon, and of Time.
Laugh with Death; woo him; please him.

Death, these are negative men;
More than negative, less than men.
Give them a sweet glance.

N. M. Rashed

The Death of Raphael*

Translated from the Urdu by Carlo Coppola and Munibur Rahman

Weep for the death of Raphael --
The Chosen of God, the master of speech,
The eternal spirit of human sound,
The limitless cry of the heavens
Is today stilled, like a word broken off.
Weep for the death of Raphael.

Come, let us weep for his untimely sleep.
He lies near his trumpet
As if a storm had thrown him upon the shore,
Sleeping silently by his trumpet
In the bright sand;
His turban, hair and beard
All sand-disheveled;
Their folds were sometimes being and non-being.
His trumpet, enkindler
Of time early and time late, far from his lips,
Lost in its own cries, its own laments.

Weep for the death of Raphael,
He, tumult itself,
The sign of hidden voices stretched from eternity to eternity.

Legions of angels mourn
For Raphael's death;
The son of Man, dust on his forehead, abject;
God's eyes, dark with sorrow; the heavenly alarum, silent;
No bugle call from the world of spirits.

With Raphael's death,
This world, without the nourishment of voice,
The daily bread of musicians, of instruments --
The singer -- how will he sing? And what?
The strings of the listener's heart are mute.
How will the dancer whirl and dance?
The floor, door, the walls of the assembly are quiet;
What now will the preacher say?
The threshold, dome and minaret are still;
How will the hunter of thought spread his snare?
The birds of house and mountain are dumb.

---

*In the Koranic tradition, it is Raphael (Isrāfīl) who will sound the trumpet to announce the Day of Judgment.

Raphael's death is
The death of the listening ear, the speaking lips,
The seeking eye, the knowing heart;
Because of him, the clamor of the dervishes,
The growth of desire in the heart,
The dialogue of lovers with lovers
Who today are hidden, their voices lost;
Now no more shouts of *tanānā hū* and *yarāb hā*!*
No more cries in the street;
Even this, our last refuge, is lost.

With Raphael's death
World-time seems to sleep, turned to stone
As if someone had eaten every voice.
Such solitude that even Perfect Beauty does not come to mind,
That one even forgets one's name.

With Raphael's death
Even the world's tyrants will forget the vision of speechless dreams,
Dreams of mastery
Swelled with murmurs of the helpless.

N. M. Rashed

Suicide

Translated from the Urdu by Carlo Coppola and Munibur Rahman

Today I've made a final resolve.
Before evening I
Had made the wall thin, licking it with my tongue;
But it rose up again before dawn.
When I made my way home
I saw darkness prostrate,
Sobbing-sad, clutching the road.
I reached home, tired of men.
My final resolve:
To jump today from the seventh storey.

*Cries of ecstasy shouted by dervishes.

Today I've found life unveiled.
Long now I've been seeing
A fickle mistress;
But today under her bed
I've seen blood,
Fresh, shining,
A wine stench entangled in its smell.
She hasn't come back to the bedroom yet,
But I've already made my last resolve.
I feel like boldly leaping out
The seventh-storey window
That opens onto the roofs and streets.
Before evening I had made
The wall thin, licking it with my tongue;
But it rose up again before dawn.
Today for sure it will be levelled to the ground.

N. M. Rashed

Desire Is a Nun

Translated from the Urdu by Carlo Coppola and Munibur Rahman

Desire is a nun, forlorn, lonely, sad.
Desire, a nun who spent her life
Among these monks devoid of eternity, the guardians of
the temple,
In these monotonous month-year halls.
The shadows of darkness weigh heavily upon the temple;
Blood streams gush from the deity's face.

-- The nun comes out of the temple at night
Carrying a bright candle and
Staggers, striking against the floor, door and walls;
She says to herself: Perhaps the candle flame
Will become the similitude of the brightness far from
the temple,
The torch of the coming dawn.

-- Desire is a nun, forlorn, lonely, sad.
But how would the monks know --
Monks, lost in themselves, scared, fearing every murmur,
How would they know
Why she is forlorn, lonely, sad?
They stand, slab marble,
In the life-consumed desolation of limitless impotence
Where the roses of man's compassion do not grow.

The nun wanders, carrying a candle,
Thinking that someday, because of her,
Dew will shimmer on the grass at the temple door,
That footsteps will sound upon the pebbles.

N. M. Rashed

Mirror, Empty of Sense and Knowledge

Translated from the Urdu by Carlo Coppola and Munibur Rahman

The mirror, empty of sense and knowledge,
How shall we turn its non-being into being?
Being is dependent upon the rush of nights and days.
How shall we show the mirror the mirror's heart?

We cry on the useless expanse of the mirror's heart
Bare of foliage,
And the newly-sprung flower, without smell.
Men are adorned with eyes, lips and ears,
But deprived of the pleasure of commotion and of the light
of "I" and "you."
Here, wine cannot flow like tears,
Nor even the brightness of intoxication;
No beauty of revolt in the purity of the mirror's heart,
Nor is its void the road of thought.

The mirror, empty of sense and knowledge.
How shall we turn its non-being into being?
The mirror is a sea
Stilled by the magician's hand at the start of time;
Reflections force their way, hoping
The magic of the secluded heart might break because of
them
And this deathly silence might be shattered.

The mirror in its mysterious world
Listens to the dripple of time-dew dripping;
It sees the reflection, but falls tongue-tied
Like a buried city.
How shall we turn its non-being into being,
This mirror, empty of sense and knowledge?

N. M. Rashed

Expression and Access

Translated from the Urdu by Carlo Coppola and Munibur Rahman

-- Brush, instrument, fresh flowers, dancing feet.
There are many pretexts to express oneself;
But with whom should man talk
When there is no excuse for meeting,
And access, always short-reaching,
Is not the ultimate object of talk?

-- A particle of the hand of dust
Sometimes like a gamboling spark,
Happy with the prick of some unknown desire,
Helpless because of the burning furnace-flame in its breast
-- A particle, always separated from itself,
Suddenly becomes the deception of voice, and irradiates,
Sometime becomes the junction of light, color, line and arch,
Sometimes becomes the lord of meaning
-- The lord not caught in the bondage of misfortune.

From the brightness of this one particle
Start swirling blue, month-year whirlpools
In the hands and feet of some sleepy dancer.
From the astonishment of this one particle
Some potter's dream turns to poetry;
From this one, deathless particle
The paltry brick finds lasting life,
And roofs and doors, the nightless dawn.

-- But to whom should a man talk?
Brush, instrument, fresh flowers, dancing feet.
Man is left thinking:
When, why, how shall I lift such a heavy burden?
Why, then, should I talk?

N. M. Rashed

The Strings of Desire

Translated from the Urdu by Carlo Coppola and Munibur Rahman

-- The entangled strings of desire.
The unseen strings, tied in knots.

-- Last night some people descended from the stars;
They say: "Untangle the strings of your desire;
Untangle them
Like the rays of the stars
Lest such star-arrows rain
That neither desire nor strings remain."

-- The entangled strings of desire.
The passers-by, star-descended,
Whose leaven is all light,
Are not aware of desire, nor do they know of
The entangled secret of desire's strings --
The desire of our world, the precious commodity of the
world of annihilation;
But these people, the star-descended,
Are captives in the inevitable strands of eternity.

We say to them: "O inhabitants of Mars!"
(Who knows from which star or other they come?)
Courteously we say: "O respected people of Mars,
Do you not see the color of the entangled strings of
these desires?"
But they are probably not inclined towards color,
Because they know nothing of them;
They have a different idea about color --
Their union and separation are different --
Their months and years are different.

-- With great naiveté we say:
"O respected people of Mars! Haven't you ever seen
The color of entangled arms,
Of glances intoxicated by love,
The color of sin . . .?"

N. M. Rashed

I Too Have Some Dreams

Translated from the Urdu by Carlo Coppola and Munibur Rahman

O love, conquering and kindling eternity, I too have some dreams;
I too have some dreams.
Because of this age and its dry rivers,
Because of the vast plains and cities' desolations,
Because of the marauders, I grieve and despair.
O love, conquering and kindling eternity, I too have some dreams.

O love, conquering and kindling eternity, I too have some dreams;
I too have some dreams
Whose secrets are unknown even today,
Which are innocent of the repose of position and honor,
Of defilement by road dust;
They do not disappear from life's futile struggle
And are themselves the meaning of being.

O love, conquering and kindling eternity,
O soothsayer, learned, noble, old --
It was you who told us the meaning of every dream,
Who told us of the conquest of heart-vanquishing sorrow;
By your hand every chain of fear crumbled.
O love, conquering and kindling eternity, I too have some dreams,
I too have some dreams.

O love, conquering and kindling eternity,
Dreams buried beneath our ancestors' self-made stories of night,
Beneath the broken superstition-walls of ruined religion,
Beneath the thoughts of the Shiraz mystic, his wine cup half-filled,*
Beneath the adversity-heap of a prostrated culture --
Some dreams are free, but overawed by advancing light.
They have no impulse for good nor courage for evil;
They are themselves the sweepings of that self,

*Hafiz.

Bashful of themselves.
Some dreams, seekers of power from the turning of tools,
Dreams for which the adornment of this world means servitude
to the Provider;
Some dreams, for which man's security means the equality
of sorrow;
Some dreams, whose practice is the passion for tyranny,
Which have neither the world nor faith.

Some dreams nurtured by light, but their dawn lost --
Fire which leavens the dough of love, its sparks lost;
Dreams, aware of the whole but ignorant of parts;
Dreams for which the rank of tearful eye is nothing,
The heart is nothing; heads are so equal that heads are
nothing,
The expression of skill is nothing.

O love, conquering and kindling eternity,
These are not my dreams; mine are different,
My age is different.
In the new age of dreams, there are no ants and locust,
no Leo and Taurus;
None has the taste for surrender nor the passion for
tyranny;
Everyone has a new way.

O love, conquering and kindling eternity, I too have some
dreams.
I swear by every dream --
Though hidden and veiled,
Concealing in their bosom a smiling maiden's speech --
Every one of them holds the unity of body and thought,
meaning and speech
Like lovers whose eternally thirsty lips long for
attachment
(O happy moment).

O love, conquering and kindling eternity, I too have some
dreams,
New dreams of perfect freedom,
Of the product of every heart-rending effort,
Of bells tolling at the new feast of man's birth,
Of the stages of this earth's grandeur,
Or of a new heart in earth's bosom.
O love, conquering and kindling eternity, I too have some
dreams,
I too have some dreams.

Pabitra Sarkar

FIVE "DANGEROUS" BOOKS

On the question of censorship in East Pakistan

January 1, 1970, was a momentous day for Pakistan, for on that date she regained some of her democratic rights. Though the "amnesty" came as a condescending gesture from a military regime suddenly presenting a seemingly more benevolent image, it was, to the people of Pakistan, something to be thankful for. In contrast with this gesture of goodwill, however, there had been an earlier edict issued in December, 1969, which proscribed the circulation of five Bengali books by East Pakistani authors and banned their further publication in Pakistan. These books were:

1. *sanskritir sankat* (*"the crisis of culture"*) by Badaruddin Umar.

2. *samskritik sampradayikata* (*"the communalism of culture"*) by Badaruddin Umar.

3. *satyer moto badmas* (*"a rogue as truth is"*) by Abdul Mannan Sayed.

4. *allemni* by Satyen Sen.

5. *jele tris bachor o pak-bharater sangram* (*"thirty years in prison and the freedom struggle of Indo-Pakistan"*) by Trailokyanath Chakrabarty (fondly called "Maharaj" by the people).

The first two books are collections of essays; the third, of short stories; the fourth is a historical novel; and the fifth, an autobiography. The last-mentioned book had appeared in an earlier version in Calcutta in the early years of Independence, though the author had opted to stay on in Pakistan as a true patriot. In 1968 he published an enlarged edition from Dacca, with a slightly changed title.

One is hard put to understand just why these five books were banned together. The authorities considered them anti-Pakistani, but that they are not. They may question certain cultural values and interpretations of history, even the propriety of some administrative measure imposed upon the people of Pakistan; but they never at any instance seek to destroy the geo-political reality that is Pakistan. At most, they create an image of Pakistan which may not correspond exactly with the socio-political setup now obtaining in that country. Perhaps that is not as innocuous a stance as one would like to think.

Badaruddin Umar deserves detailed notice for the simple reason that he raises in his essays some fundamental theoretical issues and challenges some of the broad premises underlying the creation of Pakistan. He was at one time, I believe, a Reader in Political Science at the Rajshahi University in East Pakistan. Now, I understand, he is a full time political worker, belonging to an extremist group in East Pakistan -- a rather unfortunate matter, as his writings betray hardly any violent mood or revolutionary passion. Before suddenly acquiring dubious distinction as an author of banned books, Umar had published another volume of essays in 1966 titled *sampradayikata* ("communalism") and dedicated it to his mother. That little volume first came to the notice of readers in Calcutta in 1967, when a Bengali weekly organized an exhibition of books, journals and newspapers from East Pakistan. The Calcutta literati were somewhat surprised -- what? a book on communalism from the pen of a Muslim author? Of course, it was their simple-mindedness. Not that they have themselves been vociferous on this issue. The last communal riot in Calcutta occurred as recently as 1964, while in other parts of India terrible things happened in all the subsequent years, but none of the predominantly Hindu writers has come out with a book that deals sensibly with this gnawing issue. Small processions, letters in newspapers, a few scattered articles -- all temporary responses. One hears of a Committee for Communal Harmony, but never sees it in action. The Bengali intelligentia, by and large, simply hope to wish the problem away. It is not their immediate concern. Also, it does not have the obvious glamor of "internationalism" which seems to enamor them more. That this question was first tackled by an East Pakistani writer should make all East Pakistanis very proud.

Umar's is a detached enquiry; hence, its value is more permanent than if it had been merely an emotional outburst. He sets out to state a few home truths but without pretending to be a prophet, and is happy, at least in this first book, in the role of a researcher. His prose style slightly reminds one of Pramatha Chaudhury, but Umar carefully avoids the latter's obsession with word-play and epigram. Umar knows who his readers are -- ordinary, educated Bengalis; hence, his style is direct and lucid and avoids being either pungent or sentimental. Though his predilection for a dialectic approach is never concealed, he never explicitly brings in Marxist theory.

sampradayikata must be read as an introduction to his latter two books -- those which have been banned. It is an essay in retrospection. History is analyzed; certain conclusions are arrived at. In the later volumes, contemporary situations are investigated in the light of those conclusions. He does not sound one note of propaganda in his first book; he presents the bearing of a serious scholar, not that of a partisan. That air of cool detachment could not be maintained in the later books. He had to assume the role of an activist; his involvement there is greater. Thus, the three books taken together form a whole. As a committed and conscientious intellectual, he wants to rout some evils, correct some mistakes, remove certain vices from his society. Truth, not superstition or blind faith in some divine revelation, is his guide. He looks around, traces the recent and the not-so-recent past, and tries to catch our history in a particular perspective. He is scholarly,

but not pedantic. Quotations are rare in his books, but sources of information are listed at the end in an adequate bibliography. *Sampradayikata* contains six essays; their titles translate as follows:

1. Self-Determination and Democratic Nationalism (pp. 1-8)
2. Communalism (pp. 9-18)
3. Communalism and the Theocratic State (pp. 19-27)
4. Islamic Nationalism and Islamic Culture (pp. 28-42)
5. Communal Riots (pp. 43-51)
6. Communalism and Political Progress (pp. 52-61)

The appendix contains a review of Professor Anisuzzaman's dissertation *muslim manas o bangla sahitya* ("the Muslim mind and Bengali literature.")

As mentioned earlier, this first book contains the seeds of Umar's later thought. He begins with the proposition that the democratic nationalist movement on the subcontinent had been, in the main, a middle-class (his term, "bourgeois") phenomenon. The Hindu bourgeoisie dominated the scene because they had a precious headstart in trade and commerce. They were the first to learn the language of the new rulers and immensely benefitted from that act, while the Muslims, who had just lost an empire, sat back in aversion. Eventually a bourgeois class also emerged among the Muslims, but the Hindus already had the lead. The chance for a fair competition was lost forever. Inequality in the economic and political spheres gave rise to a communal inferiority complex, which in turn lead to a sense of communal injustice. From there, simple, unadorned communalism was only a single, inevitable step away. In Umar's words:

> That the call for self-determination of the Muslims was in fact a call for the self-determination of the Muslim bourgeoisie, was understood by neither of the two communities. The Hindus branded the call as communal and were pleased with themselves, while the Muslims, ignoring the economic basis of the Pakistan Movement, raised the cry for a religious state. (pp. 7-8)

The state they had dreamed of, Umar asserts, was not religous in the communal sense of the term. Therefore, he concludes, Pakistan, as it has been realized, has failed to provide a true and stable bond between its two parts, though religion still holds some sway over the popular mind. In the second essay he elaborates on this observation:

> Communalism is not the same as devotion to one's faith. . . . Devotion involves individual belief and a personal sense of submission, while communalism implies submission to the will of the community rather than of God. Moreover, true devotion is really concerned with the other world . . . while communalism reaps its harvest down here. You do not have to oppose or hurt someone in order to be devoted to your faith. But communalism thrives on conflicts with and destruction

of other beliefs. (p. 9)

Hence, communalism and religious devotion are poles apart. Hardly any religious or social liaison occurred between the Hindus and the Muslims and this lack of meaningful dialogue between the two communities prejudiced them against each other. The British rulers exploited this situation to their utmost profit. The provision for separate elections on the basis of communal representation was one such device. From then onward, the two communities could only rarely join hands in some common program of the nationalist movement. The Lucknow Pact and the Khilafat Movement were momentary illusions of an understanding; they raised more hopes than they fulfilled. In the later elections, Hindu and Muslim candidates began to depend on the support of their respective communities and all ideological professions became meaningless. Politics consisted of decrying the other community and discovering its sinister intentions. This negative approach, adopted by Hindus and Muslims alike, obstructed the path of a greater, popular revolution.

That religion has its several mundane uses in the hands of a bourgeoisie is shown in the third article. Umar contends that a truly nationalist movement should lead to the creation of a nationalist state wherein religion need not have a useful function to serve. But this vision was lost in the struggle for freedom from its inception. Hindu patriots of the nineteenth century thought of independence in terms of a revival of ancient Hindu glory in which the roles of the other communities were defined imprecisely, if not totally ignored. In reaction to this, the Muslim bourgeois class organized itself under the leadership of Saiyad Ahmad Khan and became more communally oriented. Religion barred for both the communities the way to sharing a common heritage, and also hindered their striving together for a common goal. That is why the Muslim upper middle-class could not grow a true sense of belonging to a country in which they had lived for generations. In the heyday of the Wahhabi Movement they were even prepared to leave India, their motherland on all counts, forever. Umar indicts that movement as the climactic point of the reactionary trend at work. He is also bold enough to conclude:

> The dream of Pakistan was, in fact, not a dream of devoted Indian Muslims to form a truly religious state. It was a dream of the Muslim bourgeois class to establish a state that served their own interests. (p. 26)

In the next article, Umar rightly points out the fact that when Mr. Jinnah proposed his Two-Nation theory, he did not distinguish communal identity from the national, as the two were the same to him. But Mr. Jinnah had also shifted his position in his inaugural address to the Pakistan National Assembly on August 14, 1947. In it he did not mention his earlier doctrine, but proclaimed:

> . . . we should keep in front of us . . . our ideal and you will find that in course of time Hindus will cease to be Hindus and Muslims will cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of one state.

Umar finds that after all these years, religion is no more a motivating force in Pakistan. To him the reason for this is simple. Once the interests of the Muslim bourgeoisie were given a concrete shape, religion was left with no definite political role. A class-oriented society is never formed on religious basis, nor can religion reconcile conflicting class interests which, for Umar, are the only factors that divide people into sections of society. Therefore, he tells us that a Bengali Muslim peasant is in no significant way close to a member of the Pakistani Muslim elite (who still is nostalgic about his Arab or Persian forebears). The class cleavage is more fundamental than their religious identity. "From the ceremonial point of view alone, it is the difference, not the likeness, that is more pronounced between a village Muslim from East Pakistan and one from Madras or Afghanistan." (p. 38) And so he concludes: "the accepted argument that the Indian Hindus and Muslims have diagonally opposed cultures and the Indian Muslims form a homogeneous and monolithic communal cultural unit is hollow and not supported by facts." (p. 38) That the nationalist aspirations of the two communities assumed a communal character was most unfortunate, and Umar puts the blame for this turn of events chiefly on the leaders of the Muslim bourgeois nationalist movement in his article "Islamic Nationalism and Islamic Culture." It is perhaps the best essay in the book, rich in rational analysis and fair in judgement.

The next article seeks to identify the forces at work behind communal riots. Umar begins with the premise: "the interests of the higher middle class (which is, incidentally, the ruling class) need riots." (p. 45) This may smack of easy generalization, but the appeal of his cool analysis of pertinent facts can hardly be escaped. The news media also definitely have a hand in fanning communal passions, because they are mainly controlled by the ruling class. "In the post-independence years, communalism has been the chief means by which the ruling class has succeeded in gagging the class-consciousness of its own proletariat." (p. 46) The solution he proposes is certainly daring if we note the time it was made -- the Indo-Pakistani war was hardly over:

> To eradicate the communal problem from the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, the endeavor of the two peoples alone would hardly suffice. The problem is similar to that of canal water in West Pakistan or flood control in the East. To reach the right solution, we need the cooperation of both the governments, and friendship and goodwill on the part of the people of both the countries. (p. 51)

In the final essay, Umar establishes that communalism deters political progress and gives the class enemy a "mask of friendliness" that deceives the proletariat. The Muslim farmer in Bengal was encouraged to look at the oppressive Hindu landlord more as a communal foe than as a class enemy. This vitiated the nationalist movement in the subcontinent. Communalism grew out of the clash of the bourgeois interests of the two communities. Similar conflicts are now surfacing in the relationship between the two wings of Pakistan as we discover West Pakistan forging far ahead of the Eastern wing in economic prosperity. Communalism is still the chief weapon possessed by the bourgeois interests in Pakistan and "it has been used, with partial or full success, to crush all democratic movements since 1947."

Umar's second book, *The Crisis of Culture*, has a narrower focus: the perverting influence of communalism on our culture. In this book, first published in November, 1967, he seems a bit agitated and his arguments are somewhat animated. He has apparently lost the detachment that distinguished his first volume. His position has shifted from that of an academic analyst to that of an active partisan. But his attack is still restrained and even in his bitterest moments his comments remain quite "parliamentary." This book contains seven articles, and though footnotes are conspicuous by their absence, there is an adequate bibliography. The articles are on the following topics:

1. The Crisis of Bengali Culture (pp. 1-12)
2. Islamic Culture (pp 13-53)
3. Islamic Education and the Study of the Mother Tongue in the Nineteenth Century (pp. 54-75)
4. February 21 and Cultural Self-determination (pp. 76-81)
5. The Medium of Education (pp. 82-93)
6. Student Politics and Cultural Movement (pp. 94-105)
7. Rabindranath Tagore and the Culture of East Pakistan (pp. 106-109)

As we are now familiar with his historical premises, we can safely predict how he is likely to treat these contemporary questions. As we have already observed, he is a partisan and a publicist here, but his emotions never distort his reasoning. His aim here is to "replace self-interest and superstition with reason and historical and social consciousness"; he believes that when the cultural consciousness of the people becomes free from communalism, the cultural firmament of the country becomes clear too.

The very first sentence is explosive in its content: "To conjure up a cleavage between being a Bengali and being a Muslim is to be communally motivated." (p. 1) The question whether one is a Bengali or a Muslim or a Pakistani is a totally irrelevant one and does not lend itself to any premise of logic. The two Germanys have two conflicting ideologies; politically, too, they are separate states -- but the peoples call themselves Germans all the same. Religion should not lead one to sever one's links with one's heritage. Russia does not encourage any religion now, but she would not part with the heritage of Tolstoy, his pronounced religious stance notwithstanding. Then why should a Bengali Muslim deprive himself of the creations of Vidyasagar, Bankimchandra, Michael Madhusudan, Tagore, and Saratchandra? For Umar, there is no crisis of culture in the day-to-day life of a Bengali Muslim. A crisis arises only when "the Muslim bourgeoisie stamps Bengali culture as Hindu culture and tries to banish it from the state." (p. 11) There is no absolute, independent culture of the Bengali Muslim; language, rather than religion, is the primary basis of culture in Bengal. Still, culture is manifestly formed by class alignments, since the culture of a Muslim sharecropper is different and distant from that of a Muslim landlord. One cannot dichotomize Bengali culture into Hindu and Muslim -- as Bankimchandra stated

long ago in his review of Mir Musharraf Hussain's *Bisada-Sindhu* ("the sea of sadness"), a narrative of the tragedy of Karbala. Only the culture of the Bengali bourgeoisie is sharply divided on religious lines, but in Bengali folk culture the division is much less apparent. This is not to say that there is no difference between the religious lives of the two communities. There are several differences of rites and ceremonies, but none is fundamental in character, except possibly the rite of the dead. A Bengali Muslim is culturally much closer to a Bengali Hindu than he is to a non-Bengali Muslim.

The third article is retrospective in character and tries to trace the source of the lack of interest which the Muslim Bengalis of the higher classes display toward their native language. Umar maintains that one of the earliest leaders of the Muslim nationalist movement, Nawab Abdul Latif, whose sway over the community was considerable, was a conservative to the core. He did not possess any great love for Bengali as a language, and requested the Hunter Commission to provide elementary education in Bengali for the lower-class Muslims who were hardly distinguishable from the lower-caste Hindus. But the Bengali he prescribed was first to be reformed for that purpose by adopting scores of Arabic, Persian and Urdu words, words that he considered relevant to the religious life of the community. Urdu, on the other hand, was to be the medium of education for the upper-class Muslims. So, it seemed to the Nawab that Bengali Muslims presented a divided society, consisting of the highs and the lows. The first group consisted of the so-called descendants of the erstwhile Muslim rulers, religious leaders and preachers who had allegedly come from Arabia, Iran or Turkey. The other class was formed of the converts from the low-caste Hindus and Buddhists who were kept on a lower rung even in the Muslim social structure. Bengali, being the native tongue of the latter group, was hardly fit for the education of the upper-class Muslims. Richer languages -- Arabic, Persian and Urdu -- were there, more suitable for that purpose. Such a view held by the celebrated Nawab still prevails in one section of Bengali Muslims. They want to create a thing called Islamic Bengali. Umar vehemently fights this idea and declares that there can be no such phenomenon in language and literature. The words that represent the so-called Islamic Bengali, e.g., *pāni* ("water") and *āṇḍā* ("egg"), are not even Arabic, Persian or Urdu in their ultimate origin. They come from Sanskrit itself. The people who insist on using these words instead of the usual Bengali terms, *jol* and *ḍim*, display an ignorance of their own language.

In the fourth article he discusses the language policy of the Government of Pakistan. Bengali youths sacrificed their lives for the cause of their language, and their martyrdom was redeemed when the nation accepted Bengali as one of the state languages. But, for Umar, the movement for Bengali as a national language was only a part of the larger movement for cultural autonomy for East Pakistan. He has doubts as to whether the said autonomy has yet been achieved. Notwithstanding its newly achieved national status, Umar observes in the next article that Bengali is neglected as much now as before. There are as many covert designs against it as there have been overt attempts to ignore it in the educational policy of the government. Scores of "cadet colleges" have been set up in Pakistan where wards of rich people go after attending the English-medium "public schools," and go on to select jobs afterward. In the upstart high society of Dacca, parents proudly converse with their children in English. Hence, for Umar, the bloodshed on February 21, 1952, is yet to be properly honored; the restoration of Bengali to its due

position is still an unrealized dream.

The next article on student politics and cultural movement is a digression from the main theme, but a quite pertinent one. By way of sounding a warning for everyone concerned, Umar maintains that the so-called student movements have no well-defined class character; hence, their aims are always full of contradictions which ultimately help the opposite side. The bases of these movements are quite often in middle-class sentiments and invariably lead the students to individual opportunism, anarchy and pointless destruction.

In "Rabindranath Tagore and the Culture of East Pakistan," the author apparently had to leave his cool stance. Those who desire to ostracise Rabindranath's literature from East Pakistan (since his is a "corrupting" influence on the alleged Islamic culture there -- his crimes: he was a Hindu and an Indian) -- those people are veritably nuts, Umar says. If one has to do away with all of the pre-Pakistani Indian heritage, why gloat over the remnants of the civilizations at Mohenjo-daro, Harappa and Taxila? Is it merely because the latter can bring in a lot of foreign currency while Rabindranath cannot possibly be turned into such merchandise? If an "Indian" author must be kept out at all cost, why is Nazrul Islam worshipped as the arch-deity of Muslim Bengali renaissance? Is not Nazrul more of an "Indian" since his family had opted to stay on in India? To leave Rabindranath and many liberal Muslim authors out of the East Pakistani literary heritage is, in Umar's view, nothing less than a conspiracy to keep the literature of East Pakistan in a constantly underdeveloped state.

The Communalism of Culture, his third and most recent volume, published in February, 1969, deals with almost the same material, with some repetition and touches of elaboration here and there. But the attacks are more severe here, as these articles were written in reply to his critics. The titles of the twelve articles are as follows.

1. Cultural Communalism (pp. 1-7)
2. Homecoming of the Muslims (pp. 8-11)
3. Foreign Words in Bengali (pp. 12-18)
4. Foreign Influences on the Culture of East Pakistan (pp. 19-24)
5. The Opium Called Nazrul Islam (pp. 25-32)
6. Literature and Cultural Heritage (pp. 33-46)
7. The Class-Role of Cultural Communalism (pp. 47-66)
8. The Politics of Language and Spelling Reform (pp. 67-78)
9. February 21 (pp. 79-80)
10. On Gorky's Birth Centenary (pp. 81-82)

11. On the October Revolution and Culture (pp. 83-85)

12. The Historical Background of Socialist Thought (pp. 86-112)

The first nine articles are the ones we are concerned with, and in these he never deviates from his first premise: culture has its primary basis in economic class divisions. A close second in importance for culture is language. Religion, which has been used against the people at different stages of history, has less to do with culture now. It played this anti-people role in the nationalist movements of the two communities and still does in East Pakistan. In the second article he repeats the old proposition: the members of the Muslim feudal class never thought of themselves as Indians. In imitation of them and encouraged by them, a section of middle-class Bengali Muslims (local converts) also began to pride itself on its non-Indian heritage, more imaginary than real. Thus, they began to behave like immigrants in their native land. The struggle to make their language and culture independent that began in 1947 finally turned into a successful struggle "to return to the homeland."

His proposal in the third article seems to be: if we need new words in Bengali, we should borrow them from richer languages according to our needs in the modern age. The present state of the world being what it is, it would be useless, nay, foolish, to borrow them from Arabic and Persian. In a similar vein, he asks some embarassing questions in his fourth articles. How is lipstick closer to Islam and Islamic culture than the *kumkum* mark on the forehead of a girl? In what way do van Gogh and Gauguin have more affinity with the Muslim or "Pak-Bengali" culture than Abanindranath and Jamini Roy? Condemning the attitude of the cultural "brokers" who profess such absurd ideas, Umar uses a perfect metaphor: "They want to set up a reign of fireflies so they must drive out the sun, the moon, the planets and the stars." (p. 24)

The fifth article is daring, if anything, in its unflinching outspokenness. He makes a fair appraisal of Nazrul Islam's poetry at the outset, but goes on to say that to put up Nazrul as a rival to Rabindranath in East Pakistan not only looks silly in itself, but is part of a political conspiracy. Such an attempt hardly puts Nazrul in a glorious light, nor does it help one truly evaluate his poetry. If Nazrul is branded simply as the author of an "Islamic" literature and the chief architect of a Muslim renaissance, one gets only a partial view of that great man. It also means one either ignores or deliberately leaves out a large part of his creations. Umar suggests that some people may be seeking to make him into a weapon for communalism. In the next article he proudly adds that the present East Pakistani literature is directly linked with the so-called Hindu heritage of Bengali literature. To ignore this fact is nothing short of "madness." Even the Vaishnava literature and *kirtan* should not be deemed foreign by a Bengali Muslim:

> We must not think that our present culture in East Pakistan is an upstart one, that it has no great tradition to boast of. We really do possess a glorious heritage. The Bengali culture of the past one thousand years is the life-force of our culture, which only began its recent history on August 14, 1947. We must not forget that glorious tradition. (p. 41)

The next article repeats much of what has been said so far and can be skipped in our discussion.

The eighth article is about the Bengali language movement in East Pakistan. The movement was first launched in 1948, when the then Minister of Education, Fazlur Rahman, proposed to adopt the Arabic script for Bengali. Then there were some who pleaded for a "scientific" reform of the Bengali alphabet. But after the popular revolt in 1952 against the attempt to make Urdu the sole state language in Pakistan, the authorities seemingly learned their lesson and promptly shelved all the earlier proposals for "reforms." But the proposals were not altogether buried; their ugly heads still pop up here and there. Is there a writer, Umar asks in conclusion, who feels the Bengali alphabet is less congenial to his creativity, that it cripples or cramps his imagination?

The well got-up collection of short stories, *A Rogue As Truth Is* by Abdul Mannan Sayed, has also been banned, though for allegedly non-political reasons. Sayed's style is what is now being called the "new style" in Bengali fiction -- a phenomenon distinctly of the sixties -- employing a prose that is poetic but with a suspicion of incoherence. Though the surface effect is of stream-of-consciousness, it is Jack Kerouac and not Virginia Woolf who is the direct inspiration. In diction and in content, Sayed is at par with his Calcutta contemporaries, and predictably questions quite a few values that the generation preceding him used to cherish. The Oedipus complex is the theme of the first important story in the volume titled "A Prologue to Matricide." A grownup man who has so far monopolized all the love of care of his middle-aged mother suddenly finds he has a rival. In her forty-fifth year, the mother has fallen helplessly and painfully in love. The son, furious with jealousy, begins searching for "arguments" for killing her. In the end he gets the green light from his alter-ego: "Now you have acquired plenty of 'arguments' from everything around you. . . . Thank God, now you can peacefully go forward and kill." (p. 21) The hero of the next story, "Fear," has been afraid of everything ever since the day he forced a timid and half-willing girl of the neighborhood to surrender to him. He never goes out, stays hiding in a corner of his room -- a self-exiled, cowardly existence. But eventually he is able to resolve to kill himself, and so, one evening, "he set out for that huge, branching tree near the boundary wall to commit suicide, a coil of rope in one hand from fear of other men, and a lantern in the other from the fear of snakes and darkness." (p. 32) In almost all Sayed's stories, a harmless and weak person, respectable and normal in the eyes of the society, abruptly turns violent. He hurts himself more than others, only to feel himself more deeply, only to be himself at least once. A shy, young lecturer of art goes to see a doctor, who tells him he has only a month or two more to live. In a daze, the lecturer comes out of the doctor's office and wanders into a movie theater. Watching the cheap Urdu movie, he tries to shout and whistle with the crowd around him. Later he encounters a prostitute, and for the first time in his life makes love, drinks, utters obscenities, and ends up vomiting in her room. Lying in his vomit on the floor he vows, "Within the few days that are left to me, I will kick away all the false treasures of respect I have acquired in the past years." ("Degradation") Another story, "The Meat," reminds one of the cruel

detachment of Manik Bandhopadhyay. The daughter of the family has been made to spend the night in the rich guest's room. The father, while dining on the meat brought by the rich guest for the family, remarks, "The meat is delicious." In "The Slave," we meet the extraordinary character of a village old man as seen through the eyes of a small boy. To the boy the old man relates the colorful tales of his long life -- he has "kneaded" the world for seventy years. One night the boy suddenly wakes up and finds the old man, who slept in the next bed, standing naked and muttering reproaches to himself, "Control your lust, you fool! There is still time! Repeat the name of Allah, He is the all-protector!" "The Key" is another interesting story. A young man loses the key to his apartment and while searching for it in the big apartment building, has a variety of experiences. The key, however, is not found and, disappointed, he moves into another building. But he says, "I am still looking for the key to my old apartment, I, who have been locked out by myself, a foreigner in my own world. I will, for the rest of my life, stay in someone else's house and look for the right key to my locked room -- that is my fate." The last story, from which the volume got its title, is another allegory. A child loses her mother at a county fair, hears she has been raped, then is herself carried away by four persons, like a coffin to a grave. As one can see, several stories have obvious political significance, and that very thing may be, in the eyes of the authorities, what is wrong with the book. It is an important book, a worthy contribution to the literature of Bengal (though, unfortunately, the true beauty of the stories cannot be guessed from the skeletons I have given).

Satyen Sen is, I am told, a disciple of Maulana Bhasani, but his book *Alberuni* has nothing to do with his political beliefs. It is a historical novel, based on the life of Alberuni (A.D. 973-1048), who left a chronicle of his visit to India. There is no love motif in the book, nor is there any sex; still it makes engrossing reading. The author has a flair for telling a story. Why was this book banned? One can only guess as follows:

1. At one place Alberuni praises the wisdom of ancient India and pays tribute to its contribution to Arab science.

2. The author depicts the character of Alberuni as a mixture of Socrates and Galileo, neither of whom was a darling of the Establishment.

3. At another occasion, Alberuni's lifelong friend Ahmad says, "When soldiers rule the land, what good can happen?"

4. During his stay in India, Alberuni is respectful toward the religion and customs of the Hindus, and when he leaves, takes with him several treatises in Sanskrit. He shows resentment over the destruction of the temple at Somnath.

The autobiography of "Maharaj" contains not a single anti-Pakistan statement. A veteran revolutionary who has spent close to thirty years behind bars, the author had stayed on in East Pakistan at the time of the Partition, refusing to leave the place of his birth. I fail to understand why this book fell under the wrath of the authorities. It hardly has the makings of another "Che" diary. He describes a communal riot at Naogaon, Sylhet, but blames the Hindus for it. The author was nearing eighty when he was imprisoned again at the outbreak of hostilities between Indian and Pakistan in 1965. Made again a third class prisoner, the old man asks a disarmingly simple question: "The Indo-Pakistani war is here and now, but it isn't I who brought it about. Why then am *I* in prison?" (p. 377) Was this question so dangerous to the stability of the regime that the book had to be banned?

Nobody knows. But later events in East Pakistan have shown that there were indeed reasons for the authorities to be afraid of these books.

Alessandro Bausani

BALUCHI LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE*

A brief survey of Baluchi, with examples

A. The Baluchi Language

The Baluchi language belongs to the Iranian family of Aryan languages, one of two Iranian languages among those of Pakistan, the other being Pashto. The Baluchis themselves consider their language to be only a corruption of Neo-Persian, a dialect of modern Persian, but European linguists see it rather as a modern form of an old Iranian dialect which is not the same as that which gave origin to modern literary Persian. However, it is not very clear what exact form it took because Baluchi is seemingly derived from the group of old Iranian dialects called "Eastern," but also possesses some characteristics of the Western group. At present, Baluchi is spoken by slightly more than 700,000 people in eastern Iran and in the Pakistani province previously called Baluchistan. It should be noted that not all of the inhabitants of this province speak Baluchi. In fact, in the northern area, Baluchi gives way to Pashto (see the following article), which is the most commonly spoken language in Quetta, the capital city of Baluchistan itself. To the east, in some zones of Baluchistan, a dialect of Sindhi is spoken and in the same Baluchi linguistic zone there exists a Dravidian language island where Brahui is spoken. Baluchi-speaking areas are scattered beyond the borders of Baluchistan, even as far as Soviet Turkmenistan. One of the most interesting linguistic characteristics of Baluchi is that it well perserves some old medieval Persian sounds, even in intervocalic positions; for instance, *ādēn* ("mirror") for the Neo-Persian *a'inē*. The numbering system is also interesting as it shows clear traces of vigesimal numbering: 60 is *sai-ghīst*, or "three 20's"; 80 is *chār-ghīst*, or "four 20's"; etc. Of course, modern Baluchi, especially in the mixed speech areas, is evidently barbarized by mixture with Sindhi, Pashto and Persian because it is not protected by a written literary tradition. Baluchi does not have a "classical" literature and when it is sometimes written, it is, of course, written in the Arabic script. Examples are not lacking, though, especially in translations of the Bible, of "Roman Baluchi," or Baluchi written in Roman script. Educated Baluchis, when they wish to compose in a literary manner, write in Persian or, in the case of those in Pakistan, use Urdu.

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*From *Storia delle letterature del Pakistan* (Milan, 1958). Translated from the Italian by Bernard Blair; reproduced by permission of the author.

Modern Baluchi is divided into two major dialects or groups of dialects: the first is northern, or northeastern, called "Sulaimani," which has Indo-Aryan loan words, especially from Sindhi; the second, the southern or southwestern "Makrani" dialect, with many Persian loan words. Makrani refers to Makran, the name of the Baluchi coastal region of Iran and Pakistan.

B Baluchi Literature -- Prose

As stated above, Baluchi literature is, for the most part, popular[1] and not written, and it consists of poems sung at evening gatherings by minstrels called *dom* or *lorī*, or stories told in prose by narrators. Northern Baluchi has been studied most attentively and it is in that dialect that the "ballads" were collected in the basic work of Longworth Dames.[2]

We will first consider the prose. This is mostly narratives or *novelle* characterized by (a) stories of prophets and saints; (b) stories from the more or less legendary history of the Baluchis; (c) stories of fairies and genies; and (d) stories of love and romantic adventure. Some of these have been collected from the oral recitations of the people by European scholars. Among the latter types of stories are those from the great common Islamic heritage such as Laila and Majnun, Bahram-Gur and Gulandam, while others are purely Baluchi, such as the story of Dosten and Shiren, of Shah Murid and Hani, etc. The Baluchis however, even when telling well-known stories, relive them in an original form with a sense of fantasy and attention to descriptive detail which seem to be their own and which have brought some to compare their literary taste with that of the ancient Arabs. One curious and anthropomorphic tale of the *mi'rāg*, or Muhammad's ascent to heaven, tells of the Prophet dining with God in the celestial world, separated from Him by a curtain. The hand of God appears now and then from behind the curtain to take food, and to Muhammad's amazement, he recognizes a ring on God's finger which he once had thrown into the jaws of a ferocious tiger that barred the path of his adventurous journey to heaven.

On order to give an example of the narrative technique of a Baluchi story, we have translated one of them literally. It is a Baluchi version of "The Water of Life in the Land of Shadows," a motif found very widely in Muslim narratives. We note that the words at the beginning of the story seem to place the events in a primordial age outside of known time. Both the opening and ending are stereotyped and common to all narratives and fables in prose.[3]

May He be praised; there is none so great as God.

Once upon a time there was a king and this king called forty of his servants and said, "I am going to seek the Water of Life. Come with me, but do not bring any old men. If I see an old man, I will kill him."

The servants replied, "So be it."

Now, one of the servants of the king went home to pick up his things in order to go with the king. His father said to him, "Son, where are you going?"

The son said, "We forty men are going with the king to seek the Water of Life, because the king wishes to drink the Water of Life so that he will never die."

Then the father said, "Take me with you because I will be useful to you."

The son said, "The king has said that if we take any old man, he will kill him. If I take you with me, the king will kill you."

But the father said, "Prepare a trunk and put me inside; thus I can be useful to you and the king will not see me in the trunk."

The son said, "Very well; since you insist, I will take you with me. But if the king sees you and kills you, the blame will be yours. My strength will certainly not be enough to tear you away from the hands of the king."

The father said, "Our hope is in God; what will be will be."

Then the young man loaded two trunks on a camel; in one he put his father and in the other, his belongings, and then he went to the king. The others had also prepared their baggage, and scarcely had he arrived when they all set out on the voyage.

On and on they traveled, and a day's journey from their country, they halted before some mountains where the Water of Life was to be found. They rested a while; they ate and drank tea. Then the king commanded ten horsemen to seek the Water of Life. Each one mounted his horse and they entered the Land of Shadows[4] and they rode their horses into the darkness. The king also went with his men as far as the Land of Shadows and there they unpacked their baggage. And now let us leave the king and hear about the men.

They departed, but the Land of Shadows confounded their minds and they became lost. The king waited with his eyes fixed on the road, but they did not return. The next day the king sent another five horsemen. They left and did not return.

Then the king called his servants around him and said, "Why is it that two days have passed since I sent out my men and they do not return?"

They replied, "How can we know why they do not return?"

The king said, "Alas, if only there were an old man here, how useful he could be today!"

Now the young man who had brought his father went to his father. The father asked, "So, have the men returned?"

The son said, "No."

The old man said, "Even if the king sends you, do not go because you will be lost."

Then the son of the old man said to his father, "Today the king missed the presence of an old man. He called us and asked why the men he sent out did not return, but we could not answer."

The old man said to his son, "Go to the king and say, 'I have a father and I will bring him to you if you do not kill him.'"

So the son of the old man went before the king and said, "O King, O Qibla of the World![5] I have a father and when we all came here, he came with me because he loves me very much. Now I will bring him to you if you do not kill him!"

The king said, "Bring him. I will not kill him." And the son went and brought his father.

The king then said, "Two days have come to pass since I sent my men to bring me the Water of Life, but they leave and do not return. Why does this happen?"

The old man said, "Because when they went into the Land of Shadows, found the water, took it and set out to return from the Land of Shadows, they could not find the way because the Land of Shadows has neither beginning nor end. It is a vast land out there."

Then the king said, "And what must one do so that they do not lose their way?"

The old man said, "Do one thing. Command the men to take thirty or forty mares, then tie the foals of these mares at the entrance to the Land of Shadows, then send the men to get the Water of Life."

"Very wise," said the king.

So the king sent ten horsemen to get mares. They went off and returned with thirty mares. The king said, "Leave the foals of the mares and thirty men take the thirty mares and look for the Water of Life." They tied the foals and rode off on the mares.

Now the old man said, "Take knapsacks with you and you will not regret it." Some turned back to get knapsacks; others did not. Then the old man further said, "When you reach the water, put anything you see into the sacks. When you have filled the sacks and turned the horses back, don't spur them, but let them carry you back by the right path."

They said, "So be it," and left for the Land of Shadows. The king and the old man stayed behind with three servants. Now let us leave them and see what happened to the horsemen.

They rode and they rode. At a certain spot they heard the gurgling of some water. They advanced to the water and filled one or two bottles. Some took to picking up everything they saw. Many pebbles were washed about in the water and everyone who had a place to carry them picked up the stones. Those who did not bring sacks put some pebbles in their pockets. Others did not take them and they made fun of those who did gather the pebbles and said, "Aren't there enough stones out there that you have to carry them from here?"

So they turned around on their horses and the horses followed the correct path and came out of the Land of Shadows. The men carried the water, presented it to the king and then opened their knapsacks. They looked and saw that what they had thought to be stones had turned to gold. They were no longer stones. Now those who did not carry any were sorry and even those who did carry them complained. Some said, "Why did I not bring any with me?"

And others said, "Why did I not fill my clothing with the stones?" Everyone lamented and was sick at heart.

Then the king wanted to drink the water, but the old man said, "O King, O Qibla of the World! Come, let us go, you and me, to that mountain and there you may drink you water."

The king said, "Let it be so."

The king and the old man went to the mountain and sat down at the base of a tree. Then the king said, "Now I will drink the water from my bottle."

The old man said, "Wait. Let us first perform our afternoon prayers and then you may drink the water."

The king said, "So be it." And then the king and the old man made preparations for prayer.

When they were about to begin their prayers, something round driven by the wind hit against a rock and then against another, and each time it struck, said "Wack, wack."

The king finished his prayer and asked the old man, 'Old man, while you and I were praying, there was something like a ball of wool which the wind blew against one rock and then against another and each time it made a cry and said 'Wack, wack.' What the devil was it that made that noise?"

The old man said, "Once upon a time there was a king and he, like you, drank this water. Now three hundred years have passed and he has not died. His subjects have all had enough of him and he has been exiled from his country and no one loves him anymore because he is too old. And that is why he goes wandering around these mountains. And he is so light that the wind blows him from one stone to the next, but he never dies."

And now the king said to the old man, "If things are like that, I will not drink this Water of Life."

The old man said, "O King, O Qibla of the World! You may do as you wish; but if you drink, even you will become as that king."

The king said, "I would not think of drinking this water anymore." Striking the bottle against the tree, he broke it, and the tree has remained green and fresh until this day. The king departed for his horsemen and, leaving that place with his servants, returned to his land and sat again on the throne.

And I fled from there and I wish for myself good fortune and for each of you a sweetheart!

* * *

It is noted that traditionally stories should only be told in the evening. If they are told during the daytime, the Baluchis say, they can bring bad luck to the narrator or to the house where this infraction of the rules takes place.

The "epic ballads," which almost always treat the Baluchi migrations and the wars between two principal tribal groups, the Rind and the Lashāri, form a midway point in Baluchi poetry. These ballads are infused with the imaginative influence of classical Persian and its very facile and primitive rhyming system. Some of the ballads can be said to breathe true epic qualities into the burning events of the stages of migration, the names of their victorious chiefs, the battles, and the long incursions on horseback of warriors "who passed like lightning and returned rolling like the thunder." They tell of tribes which "arose as one, driven by desire for water and destiny," invading new lands "like showers that fell during the rainy season." This epic quality is very rare in other Islamic literatures.

Among the most famous heroes of these ballads are Nodhbandag and Mir Shakar. The ballads usually begin by mentioning the Battle of Karbala,[6] and the oldest of them, judging by the archaic expressions, can be dated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Here is an example of one of the few collected from the southern dialect:

The clans of Aleppo trembled with anger
The day Yazid lifted his head.
When Sultan Shad Husain was slain
The clans conceived their hatred for Yazid.
The Lashari advanced from their camp
And with them marched the generous Nodhbandag.

Shaihak followed him closely with the Rind
And descended beyond Rodbar,
Crossed the Desert of Lar
And found themselves before the bazaar of Pahra.[7]
Beyond the borders of Bampur
They went, the men of the harnessed horses,
And women of beautiful necklaces
With sheep and cows in great herds.
Women with slovenly hair
Captured Prince Shaihak, forger of swords.
The just, generous Nodhbandag
Settled in the desert country.
The Lashari halted at Lashar[8]
And the Rind at the bazaar of Pahra.
And three years passed, one by one,
By the will of God, generous and powerful.
And then came the attack of the Ghazi,
Those Turks on swift steeds.
And the army carried the sword from Iran
(There was no place left even there for lions);
They marched like the lightning and like the wind
And roaring, they marched like thunder
From Kec to Makran, all the way to India,
Up to the river in the region of Sindh,
From Sarbaz to the desert Mand.
And Gohar, the heroine, followed.[9]
They went always in search of streams and lakes,
And they passed beyond Pagaya-land.
Those carrion Sabuki were put to rout,
The Kurds and the Khalkhali, devourers of men![10]
May the Mari have nothing to do with the Rind,
May the dwellers of the highlands remain in peace!
With Nodhbandag the Chief, the generous hero,
And Shaihak, the gallant warrior,
The clan rose as one, --
The longing for water enraptured them, and destiny too --
And they paused near rivers and rills
Studying the ground, the mouths of streams.
Kec[11] did not please the Rind
When they stopped on the nude plains of Kolwa.[12]
And a year passed entirely
From the time Shaihak settled at Ashal.
Shakar[13] like a scintillating ruby
Arose then, fortunate hero;
The minstrels came to Gar and to Danda,
From Dora to Saghik for a while,
From Zig and from Chambar to Mala,
Up to Hortan and to the bazaar of Tanda.

And leading them, Nodhbandag came;
Nodhbandag passed beyond the Hari and above,
From Ghish-Kaura to Gulkaura.[14]
They came down like rainfall in the rainy season
And then toward Kackhi and Sibi.
All the Rind went away together

In addition to migration, the next important subject of Baluchi epic ballads is the "Thirty Years War" (1489-1511) between the Rind clan led by Mir Shakar, the son of Shaihak, whom we have already mentioned, and that of the Lashari led by Gwaharam. Other tribal wars in the sixteenth century also serve as subjects for these ballads. Some others related the undertaking of the Baluchis in 1555 to help the exiled Moghul emperor, Humayun, in the reconquest of Delhi. There is no lack of other ballads of later wars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Baluchis have conserved these ballads in large folios (*daftar*) written in Arabic script. Buller, in the *Baluchistan District Gazeteer* (Series VII, pp. 81-82), describing the content of some of these folios, mentions

> . . . a poem about the migration of the Rind, other poems that give details of the history of various princes of Kēc, one Ballad of Ghulām Alī which describes the Battle of Malik Dīnār Ghik'kī against the Taqī Khān, a General of Nādir Snāh, and still another about Otmān Kalmatī and the Battle of Hammal-ē-Gīhand and the Portuguese, . . .

As we can see, some of the ballads are recorded even with the names of the authors.

The cycle of Dosten and Shiren is particularly noteworthy among the poetic *dāstān*[15] about love and romance. Dosten, a soldier of Mir Shakar, chief of the Rind, is delivered as a hostage to the Turks. His cousin and fiancée, Shiren, waits for him faithfully for many years until she is obliged to marry against her will. But just as they are about to celebrate the wedding, Dosten, released from prison, returns, having ridden his steed madly through the mountain gorges.

Here is how Dosten tells the chief who held him prisoner that his mare could no longer live in the plains and longed for the highlands (disdain for the hot plains of Sind and love for the mountains is a common theme of Baluchi poetry):

> "Zanghi is my chief; Gwaharam is my leader and friend, owner of marvelous mares. I swear by your beard, by the new-sprouted hair of your face, my mare, pursuer of wild asses, is sad. She does not want to drink the water of the Indus, nor eat the reeds and grass of Karjal of the Sind. She longs for the herds of wild asses of the highlands and misses the sweet pastures, the wild asses of the Pass of Phitokh and wells filled with fresh water. The flies and mosquitos of the desert irritate her. The reptiles do not let her sleep. The Malwari barley is too coarse for her."

> And there came a man from Khorasan, his clothes and his face filthy with dust, and he carried with him loads of red dye, bags of finest *bhang*[16] and balls of musk from Qandahar. He had with him a message from the Rind; in truth, a message from Shiren. "There is a rain over Konar, over the plains and the hills of Mangachar and in the sweet valleys of Sanni. The wells are full to the brim and the water trembles like the leaves of the tree of Gwan. It ripples like the waving fields of sugar cane. Cattle herdsmen have begun to move as have Mezhdar, Sahak and Yar Khan, owners of sheep and goats. Women have tied their bundles and the camel drivers have loaded their packs. Through the valleys of Bhanvar and Hagahu the yellow camels have bent their knees, the male camels in long tied lines, the females with their feet hobbled. Shiren has pitched a beautiful tent on the broad land of Narmukh."

There frequently was rivalry among the poets of different tribes, each one singing the glories of his race and deprecating the rival tribes. Minstrels were instructed by poets to memorize a particular poem and then referred these minstrels to the rival tribe.

Up to this point, we have not given any names of poets. The most famous Baluchi composer of love poems is Jhan Durrak, who lived in the second half of the seventeenth century and was persecuted by his prince, Nasir Khan of Kalat, for disputes over women. The imagination of his expressive songs are very interesting. Avoiding use of artificial rhetoric of standard lyrics, they utilize a technique of construction which is "European" in its emotion:

> The rain which falls unexpected from the sky comes from the direction of my love. Last night I met her face to face. The sky was aflame with lightning; it is my loved one who woke me. The perfume of her braids sweetly clung to me. The pain of separation sharply stings me during the waking night and leaps up like flame from the wood of Kahir. I stir restlessly in my midnight wake in sweet expectation of meeting my love.
>
> Last night the flickering lightning came reeling like a drunkard from the direction of Jalgo, and it brought me a message from my love. It seemed that someone had wrapped my body in a mantle of flowers. To the south, the sky embraced a rainbow, and nearby, an azure cloud seemed to my eyes the face of my love.

There is also the poetry of religious theme and moral content, the stories of prophets and saints. The *dastānagh*, which have a few poems with love themes sung accompanied by the *nairighī*, or Baluchi flute, are especially prevalent among the mountain Baluchis, while among the city people, the *pahēli* and the *dosukhanē*, other types of short lyric compositions, are common. Some of these are composed during caravan voyages and recount the events of the trip, a kind of lyric comment on daily activity.

In Pakistan there is also starting a modern local press and some poets have begun to imitate the Persian *ghazal* and to use patriotic Islamic themes. Gul Khan Nasir, born about 1910 at Mushki and who studied at Quetta, should be particularly mentioned. He has published a collection of Baluchi poetry called *bulbāng* ("The Cry") and a history of Baluchistan (*tārīkh-i-balūchistān*) in Urdu. One of his poems, *nafīr* ("The Trumpet Call") calls young Baluchis to awaken and spring to the defense of Islamic ideals, including an invitation to imitate the Arabs who "march to the reconquest of Israel."

Azad Jamaldine, born about 1919, is also from Mushki and in 1953 published *A Cry of Defiance*, a collection of Baluchi verse, with a prose translation in Urdu. He also writes poetry in Persian and Urdu, and edits the monthly, *balūchī*.

In spite of efforts to create a "written" poetry and prose in Baluchi, the most attractive part of the literature is still the "popular" (oral)[17] themes. We will close this treatise with a brief three-line song:

A sign of death is the burning fever;
A sign of approaching rain, the gathering clouds;
A sign of love is certainly a smile.

NOTES

1. Translator's note: here, "popular" literature clearly means "oral." Difficulties with this will develop later.

2. M. Longworth Dames. *Popular Poetry of the Baloches* (London, 1907).

3. The text of this story with a Russian translation is found in I. I. Zarubin, *Beludzkie Skazki*, Serija Iranskaja V. (1949), 79ff.

4. *tārīk-khāna*, literally "house of darkness." Note the simplicity with which the fabulous tale is narrated.

5. *qibla* refers to the direction of Mecca towards which all Muslims bow in prayer. "Qibla of the World" here is equivalent to "Worshipped by all men" or "Your Majesty."

6. Editors' note: Battle of Karbala in 680 A.D., in which Syrian ruler Moawiya and his son Yazid defeated the forces of Husain; Moawiya was named calif and his dynasty, the Umayyads, ruled until 750 A.D. This battle has particular significance to Shia Muslims who believe that Husain, Ali's son, was the rightful calif.

7. In the Persian Makran.

8. South of Pahra.

9. Heroine of a tribal war sung about in other ballads.

10. Refers to an aboriginal tribe of enemies of the Baluchi; "Kurds" was an old generic term and is here intended to be the Brahui.

11. The Pakistani Makran.

12. Farther east, near the Sind.

13. Son of Shaihak.

14. *kaur* means "mountain stream."

15. Editors' note: *dāstān* is a sort of story or romance which makes up a very large part of all "Islamic" literatures.

16. *bhang* is a form of hashish.

17. Translator's note: "oral" is clearly implied, but not stated in the Italian. In the next essay, "popular" implies another meaning.

MLA Seminar on the Literature of South Asia

The Third Annual M.L.A. Seminar on the Literature of India and Pakistan will be held in the last week of December, 1971 at Chicago (please see the November 1971 issue of the PLMA, the official journal of the Modern Language Association, for the exact date, time, and place). The names of the speakers and discussants will be announced later, as soon as the topic and the panel of speakers and discussants are decided upon. If you are interested in the Seminar -- as a speaker, discussant, or participant -- and/or have any suggestions concerning the topics, the format of the Seminar, and so forth, please get in touch with Professor V. Gopalan, Department of English, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana, 47808, as soon as possbile.

The last M.L.A. Seminar on the Literature of South Asia, held on December 30, 1970, at New York, and presided over by Dr. K. S. Narayana Rao of Wisconsin State University, Oshkosh, Wisconsin, was devoted to a scholarly discussion of Indian Fiction: A Search for Form, initiated by Raja Rao, the well known Indian novelist. The response to his remarks on the need in Indian fiction today for rootedness in the core of ancient Indian tradition was as enthusiastic as it was intellectually challenging, and American as well as South Asian scholars of the literature of South Asia took a lively interest in the discussion.

Alessandro Bausani

PASHTO LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE*

A brief survey of Pashto, with examples

A. The Pashto Language.

Pashto, like Baluchi, is an Iranian language, belonging to the Eastern branch of this group, and is genealogically related to ancient Avestan, from which modern Persian descends, rather than to ancient Pars, the language of the Achimeneans' cuneiform inscriptions. Pashto is the national language of the Afghans[1] and, since 1940, is on a par with Persian as the official language of Afghanistan. However, it is not spoken throughout this country, as in various zones of Tajikistan where a form of Persian as well as Turkic languages are spoken. The language is widespread outside the Afghan state, extending into the area of Pakistan known as the Northwest Frontier Province with its capital at Peshawar and into part of northern Baluchistan. It can be established from the history of the literature, and especially from the rich field of popular poetry, that the most productive cultural centers of Pashto are outside the political boundaries of Afghanistan and within the areas of present-day Pakistan. The total number of Pashto speakers can be estimated at about four million, including bilingual persons, especially in Afghanistan, where all educated people know Persian. (It is not rare for pure Pathans to know only Persian).

Pashto is divided into two main dialects: that of the northeast, spoken in the areas around Kabul, Peshawar, and Yaghistan; and that of the southwest, spoken in the regions of Qandahar, Bannu, and Khatak. One of the phonetic characteristics of the northern dialect is to pronounce "kh" like the German "ch" in *Nacht*, while in the other dialect, the sound is pronounced "sh" as in "shame." Here the name *pashtū* becomes *pakhtū*. More exactly, the "a" of the first syllable of the word is pronounced as the intermediate between ū as in "flute" and ā as in "father," similar to the "u" in the English word "but." Then, at times, reference is made to the "Pushto" language and also to "Pukhto." The Afghan Pashto speaker is called *pashtūn* or *pakhtūn* (plural, *pashtāna* or *pakhtāna*). In India and Pakistan the *pashtāna* are known as "Pathans."

While Pashto preserves more archaic forms than the modern Persian of Iran,[2] it has undergone considerable influence from Indian languages.[3] There are numerous loanwords from Urdu. Afghanistan has always inclined

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*From *Storia delle letterature del Pakistan* (Milan, 1958). Translated from the Italian by Bernard Blair; reproduced by permission of the author.

toward the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. The Khyber, Gumal and Bolan Passes, of course, make Afghanistan accessible to the Indus Valley, while it is divided from Iran by inhospitable deserts to the west and southwest.

One phonetic characteristic emerging from Pashto is the harshness of its sounds and the inclination to consonant groups in initial positions, such as "khp," "zgh," etc., a unique phenomenon of Islamic languages. A widely known story in India tells of a *wazīr* who was asked by his sovereign to give an example of the languages he had heard spoken on his extended voyages. In order to make the sounds of Pashto apparent, he brought a metal pan with pebbles in it and began to shake it violently, that unpleasant noise representing the phonetics of the language!

Pashto, like most Islamic languages, is written in Arabic script interspersed with special diacritical marks.

B. The Origins of Pashto Literature.

The Pashto language has a literature that is very rich in quantity. It is essentially an imitation of Persian, though in spirit it is rather different from the Persian literature of Iran and approaches more the spirit of Indo-Persian and Urdu. This "imitation of Persian," as in the case of Urdu and other Islamic literatures, has been a little exaggerated by some European scholars who perhaps have not taken the pains to examine more closely the statistic and literary realities of these "secondary" languages which can offer some pleasant surprises. These surprises are present, without doubt, in the popular Pashto literature, one of the richest and most vigorous of Pakistan. Furthermore, the areas between the two literatures are not always easy to trace, and, even in the court literature, one feels a breath of highland simplicity unknown in other more famous "classic" Islamic literatures.

The beginnings of Pashto literature present a problem, as yet unsolved with any certainty; that is, the authenticity of some recently discovered documents, especially a *tazkira*,[4] entitled *pata khazāna* ("hidden treasure") which may have been written in 1729 by Muhammad Hotak, a writer at the court of Shah Hussein Hotak of Qandahar, who died in 1739. In this *tazkira* exist many examples of Pashto poetry which refer directly to the year 139 A.H. (756 A.D.), the epoch of the Ghors, whereas the prose fragments of the *tazkiratu'l-awaliyā* ("biographies of the saints") of one Sulaiman Maku could possibly carry the beginnings of Pashto prose back to the thirteenth century of our era. Histories of Pashto literature previous to these discoveries do not predate the sixteenth century.

One may exclude a nationalist *pia fraus* of the modern discoverer of the *pata khazāna*, Abdul Hayy Habibi, because if this were the case, Muhammad Hotak's literary ability and his knowledge of the old styles would be downright miraculous and, perhaps, even more difficult to explain than the problems of authenticity. However, one cannot help but think of, at least in the

oldest fragments of the *tazkira*, a possible fabrication of the literary atmosphere of Qandahar during the national rebirth under the Hotaks, considering the place and period in which the work was compiled. In its best light, and all things considered, it seems most probable to me that one could think of such very ancient fragments as a more recent retelling of definitely very old poetic subjects within the long oral tradition.

The greatest difficulty to attribute the *vyārana* ("song," *fakhrīya*) of Amir Krur to a Pashtun *amirs* of Ghor of the second century A. H. is, first of all, due to the fact that it is not certain when the Afghans occupied Ghor; and secondly, in the words of the foremost European authority on the Pashto language, Professor G. Morgenstierne of Oslo, "the language of the *vyārana* is . . . suspiciously modern." One can concur with the opinion of the eminent Norwegian linguist when he writes that one can believe

> in the authenticity of the *Pata Khazāna* as the work of Muhammad Hotak during the national renaissance at Qandahār in the first half of the 18th century when it was important to vindicate the antiquity of Pashto poetry in comparison to Persian. But even if he were a conscientious and zealous collector of ancient manuscripts and traditions, we cannot expect to find him to be a critical philologist and historian as well. He could have accepted the dates traditionally attributed to the poetry which he found; it is even possible that he invented some of them himself or exaggerated out of patriotism the antiquity of others he found. There is no reason to doubt that he did not really save many precious poetic relics. I think it impossible to say how old they are, but I think it probable that we do have in the *Pata Khazāna* the oldest Pashto texts which exist.[5]

Among these ancient Pashto poets of the first and oldest period, if in fact it existed (this would be the period that spans the Suri, Ghori and Lodi Dynasties which came to an end about 1494), the *pata khazāna* specifically mentions the Ghori, Amir Krur (died 711), as author of a *vyārana*, or *fakhrīya*. These are boasts for warlike undertakings. Even if these are not authentic, we will quote one because it is very vigorous and gives an idea of the proverbial bellicose nature of the people whose literature we are considering:

> I am a lion; there is no greater hero than I throughout the land,
> Not in Hind, nor in Sind, neither in Tokhar nor in Kabul,
> And not even in Zabul; no greater hero than I in this world!
> The arrows of my will and my strength come down like thunderbolts
> on my enemies;
> I enter battle and hurl myself onto the routed and the conquered.
> No greater hero than I in the world!
> A sphere of fierce destiny hovers over my victories,
> The hooves of my horse make the earth tremble and mountains fall.
> I make deserts of the lands. No hero greater than I in this world!
> The brightness of my sword shines as far as Herat and Jorum;
> The people of Gharg and Bamian and Tokhar mention my names as a cure
> for all ills.

And even in Rum everyone knows me. No greater hero than I in this world!
My arrows rain down on Merv and the enemy fears me;
I run over the frontiers of the Heri-Rud and their soldiers scatter in flight before me.
The valiant tremble before me. No greater hero than I in this world!
I have conquered Zarang with the red cheek of my sword;
I have overcome the race of the Sur and I control it and its lords and leaders;
I have raised my kinsmen to high position and power. No greater hero than I in this world.
I am generous and kind to my men; I provide and care for them;
They are greatly in my debt. No greater hero than I in this world.
My rule is steady and without blemish through the sublime mountains;
The world is mine and all the preachers from the pulpits praise only my name.
In all the days, nights, months and years, there is no greater hero than I in this world!

This same period had mystic poets such as Shaiykh Matta Ghorya-Khail (died 1289), author of the volume entitle *da khudāy mīna* ("the love of God"), which contains beautiful mystic poetry such as the one which begins:

Over the high mountains and over deserts --
at daybreak and in deep night,
The clear songs of the birds --
the sad cry of lament
Strike my ear as a single sigh
And the memory of Thee.
All are a manifestation of Thy love.
When the flowers bloom in the garden --
or the rose smiles in the orchard,
When the ocean roars with foam --
all are works of Thy love.
All the beauties of the world --
they are in Thy adoring hand,
O Sovereign, O Lord of Lords, King of Kings. . . .

For lack of space and also because of doubt about their authenticity, we have passed over some notable fragments of the *pata khazāna* which enumerate ancient poets such as Abu Muhammad Hashim (died c. 910). He could have been a pupil of the famous Arab scholar, Ibn Khallad, who in his satiric poetry, *dirham* (literally, "silver coins"), may have translated Arab satires by such poets as Kharshbun (died 1020), the mystic Shaiykh Taiman (died c. 1130), the warrior Malikyar (died c. 1175) and others into Pashto. The oldest example of prose of this period would be, as already mentioned, the biographical work of Sulaiman Maku in the thirteenth century.

The greater part of these older prose works, however, has not survived. They were mostly chronicles and religious tracts of which the more important is the history of the Yusufzai clan from the Swat region by Shaiykh Mali, written in 1417 and cited by H. G. Raverty in his *Selections from the Poetry of the Afghans* (London, 1864). However, this work cannot be found today. It is also probable that the popular poetry began in this period, as did those national prose forms which developed from that period onward. Thus, according to some, there emerged at the end of this period the famous epic legend of Fath Khan Brets, son of Aslam Khan, who came to Kalabast, near Qandahar, where his father was king. With sixty Brets, he went to India where he accomplished warlike deeds. That would have been about 900 A.H., or 1500 A.D. Still older is the legend of Adam Khan, a Yusufzai of Swat.[6] A special form of popular poetry which also could have originated in this period is the *landaī*, in which the first line is nine syllables and the second longer with thirteen. This is quite unusual for classical Muslim literature. These verses, depending on the locality, are called *tappa*, *masra* (Arabic *misrá*) or *takaī*. The last word means "point" or "sharpness." For the most part, these verses are amorous epigrams, but there are also kinds of *fakhr* ("boasts") or epics. If we are to believe a traditional account, an Afghan lady once improvised a *landaī* when the troops of Malik Khalu returned from India with the armies of Mahmud of Ghazni in the tenth or eleventh century.

C. The Moghul Period.

The first prose works of any quality which have come down to us are from the second period of Pashto literature, which may be called the Moghul Period (1494-1687). At the very beginning of this period we find an interesting person in the religious reformer Bayazid Ansari (1524-1585), known as *pīr-i-roshan*, or *rokhan* in the northern dialect, which means "luminous master." His adversaries called him *pīr-i-tārik*, or "dark master." He was from a Waziri family from the Valley of Waziristan, born at Jallandhar in the Punjab, and studied under an Ismaili named Mulla Sulaiman. When he returned to his native land of Kaniguram, Bayazid declared that he had received a divine revelation that the "Roshanites," as his adherants would soon be called, would grow rapidly in number, thus forming during this time of religious ferment one of the many Afghan reactions to Moghul rule.[7] The movement continued for a long time after the death of its founder, who died of fever retreating from a defeat by one of Akbar's generals. After the beginning of the seventeenth century, it is said that the political and military importance of the movement ceased and that no followers remained. The doctrines of Bayazid were included in his holy book entitled *khairu'l bayān* ("the best exposition"), which, he said, were "revealed" to him by God without even the intermediary of an angel. The text is in rhyming prose and in four languages: Arabic, Persian, Hindi and Pashto, with each subject repeated in each of the four languages. Only extracts of this very important first Pashto prose remain preserved as quotes by his implacable adversary, Akhdun Darvesa. The *hāl-nāma*, a book explaining the true state of being, an autobiography of the heretic (Bayazid) and a *maqsudu'l mu'minīn* ("the purpose of the believers") in Arabic are

completely lost. Bayazid's doctrines seemed to have contained anti-Moghul traits and, at the same time, material written against the Afghani aristocracy. "The qualities of a Shaiykh (religious teacher) are not hereditary," he is said to have told his father, who wished to convince him to choose a spiritual leader from their clan. "Paradise awaits him who obeys God, even if he is nothing but a black slave, and Hell awaits the disobedient, even if they are descendents of the Quresh (Quresh, the family of the Prophet). He gave great importance to "knowledge of one's self," through which one reaches knowledge of God. Ignorant people are as animals, not men, and could and should be slaughtered. The lands and properties of these people who know neither themselves nor God were to be considered possessions of those dead and inherited from other dead; hence, to be divided among the true "learned." According to the author of the important heretical and historico-religious work, the *dabistān-i-mazāhib*, Bayazid introduced new technical terms into the complex hierarchies of sufism. The four grades of *sharī'at* ("external law") *tarīqat* ("mystic order"), *haqiqat* ("realization," "reality"), *ma'rifat* ("knowledge") are for him *qurbat* ("nearness"), *vaslat* ("union"), *vahdat* ("unity") *sukūnat* ("tranquility"), the last being the supreme rank.

The orthodox teacher, Akhdun Darvesa, sought successfully to oppose Bayazid's religious influence. Darvesa died, it seems, at the age of 108 lunar years in 1638, and is buried at Peshawar where his tomb is still venerated by the people. We are indebted to him for preserving various bits and extracts from the works of his adversary whom he refuted in a book filled with vulgar invective entitled *makhzanu'l islām* ("treasure of Islam") and written in rhyming prose in imitation of the heretic's *Khairu'l bayān*. The very prolific Akhdun Darvesa wrote more than fifty works in various languages, including Arabic and Persian. His history of the Afghans from the remotest times to his day, *makhzani-i-afghānī* ("the Afghan treasure"), is specifically important. His eminence in the history of Pashto literature is of the highest rank when one considers the great number of disciples he had. As an example of the importance which he gave to the "national" language, we may cite this excerpt from the *makhzanu'l islām*:[8] "God speaks all languages, whether it be Arabic, Persian, Hindi or Afghani. He speaks in the language that the heart of man can understand." Among his disciples was his son, Abdul Karim, or Karim-Dad (died c. 1662), who seems to have collected and edited his father's *makhzan*. It seems further that there are some parts of the work which are his own. He also wrote love poems; of poetry, he wrote: "Poetry is like a sea that can only be understood by him who drowns in its vortex of death."

It is pointless to cite the innumerable disciples and relatives of Pir-i-Roshan, but among his contemporaries, Arzani deserves mention. A manuscript of his *dīvān* (collected poetic works) is in the British Museum. A nephew of Bayazid's, also a mystic and poet, was Mirza Khan Ansari, who established himself in India and died there during Shah Jahan's wars in the Deccan in 1631. The poet-saint-warrior of the same period, Mulla Mast, is also interesting. His tomb bears the inscription, "Sanctuary of Mast Baba," and is venerated in Shinwaro. In one of his books, he tells of the Holy War of his spiritual master (*pīr*) and combines, in typical Afghan fashion, mysticism and war:

> May I become a warrior dressed in the armor of Certainty (*yaqīn*) and with the sword of Faith (*bāvar*) shredding doubts;

and with the arc of Knowledge (*ma'rifat*), I make war
on the wicked, the shafts of Truth (*haqīqat*) will I
launch to the sky!

To this same period belongs perhaps the most famous Afghan poet, Khushhal Khan (1613-1689), of the Khatak clan from the southern Pashto-speaking area.[9] He is called the "Father of Pashto," having written more than 400,000 verses and numerous prose works, part of which have been lost. He was chief of the Khatak tribe and, like a good Afghan, was also a warrior. He fought against the Moghuls of India and was, for a time, held prisoner in the fortress of Ranthanbor by his principal enemy, the emperor Aurangzeb. His elegant verses, however, say little new to those who know Persian style, but show a notable robustness and simplicity which exhibit a lively interest for the clan struggles and fortunes of his tribe. Khushhal Khan had a great number of sons, nephews and pupils, all poets, so that his title "Father of Pashto" is almost due him literally, aside from the metaphorical sense of the expression. He was, furthermore, an innovator in prose style in that he chose a style close to that of ordinary conversation. Among the most important of his disciples and imitators is his son Abdul Qadir (died 1702). He too was very prolific (he translated Sa'di's *gulistān* into Pashto) and his verses are suffused with mysticism more or less in the fashion of his father. "Don't consider my poetic words as many-colored; they are blood that flows from my heart," he wrote. Because of his poetry's immediacy, I do not think that it is overrated. Here is an example of a *ghazal:*

Alas, would that heaven, which removes all other aches from
my heart, erase the sorrow for my friend!

The silent dew, if it finally caresses the rose, sadly
laments the nightingale coming from the distant rose.

Happy the burning candle, that your tongue has become a quill
for the assemblies, you who sing such a song of flame.

The lover had no news of the burning of love; in this flame
I cast thy mistress.

How can one hide a lamp behind curtains of phantasmagoria?
Even if a heavy tent veils your face, I will see it!

In mourning for the moth who dies in the flame, the candle lights
a fire on my brow.

You have forgotten Abdul Qadir, who laments all night
while you sleep tranquilly in your bed!

Third most important in Khushhal's school of poetry is Sadr Khan, another of Khushhal's sons, who presumably translated Nizami's *khusro-wa-shīrīn* and who also put into verse some popular stories such as the famous one about Adam Khan, which begins with this invocation filled with strange

images:

> O Lord, make of my heart a flowered meadow, a garden for speaking Thy name; make of my bones a plantation of cotton, and over all, kindle the light of love; and that fire, make it blaze on me until all that cotton becomes ashes. And of my heart, then, make a tulip, a cup of impassioned blood. . . .

Some Afghans prefer the very popular mystic poet Abdur Rahman, better known as Rahman-Baba, over Khushhal Khan. He was of the Mohamand tribe and lived in Peshawar where he died in 1706. His tomb is still venerated and serves to recall his rich *dīvān* of traditional mystic-erotic inspiration so well recognized by those who know Persian poetry. Here is a brief example chosen almost at random from the *dīvān:*

> Who has turned me to this madness and folly; who has taken me from my fondest habits?
>
> I don't know who it may be that pushed me to such action, Who it is who, with the magic of a glance, makes me drunk with love!
>
> Which eyes, which lashes, what flirtatious glances? Who has cast me into dust and blood like a martyr of God?
>
> Powerless, helpless in the face of many temptations; from the temptation of your eyes that have made a slave of me?
>
> I understand nothing myself, O Rahman! Who brings me to this sad state? Who almost prostrates me with grief?

D. The Hotak and Saddozai Period

In considering another famous Pashto lyric poet, Abdul Hamid (died c. 1732), also from Peshawar and from the tribe of Mohamand, we enter the third period of Afghan literature. The period generally covers the years from 1687 to 1834 and is characterized in political history as the Afghan Dynasties of Hotak at Qandahar and the Saddozai at Kabul. Abdul Hamid has been called by Bellew "the Sadi of Pashto." He founded a poetic school characterized by sentimentality, or perhaps over-sentimentality, called *sōz-u-gādāz* ("passion and ardor"), which does not express the simplicity or sincerity of his two great predecessors, Khushhal Khan and Rahman Baba

Abdul Hamid's contemporary and disciple, Qalandar, an Afridi from Jamrud in the Khyber, is worth mentioning, if for no other reason than that he was himself, with his love Mira, a subject of popular poetry. We may also mention Hamid Gul from the family of Rahman Baba, who also lived near Peshawar in the first half of the eighteenth century and wrote verse (mostly syllabic) on popular themes and pleasing dialect ballads. Here is a stanza

of his *badla*, a popular Pashto rhyming form:

Is it a *tīka* on your forehead, or is it a morning star?
Is it rose perfume, or is it your hair that falls before your face?
Is it the clean pureness of steel, or is it the eyes of Laila?
Is it the love of wine, or the spell of opium of Bengal?
Is this the pungent pain of parting, or is it fever, or is it plague?

Obviously, this is to an Indian beauty, as the *tīka* on the forehead is a caste mark worn by Indian women. The reader will easily note that almost all the poets and authors mentioned thus far are from outside the actual political borders of Afghanistan.

With the establishment of the Hotak Dynasty at Qandahar where a literary renaissance was created in the eighteenth century, we move to an area more distant from India. There, court poets surrounded the sovereigns who were often themselves literary. Belonging to this literary circle at Qandahar was Muhammad Hotak, author of the previously mentioned biographical anthology of poets, the *pata khazāna*. The style of the part of the book attributed to him is very simple and remarkably modern, while the remainder of the manuscript which was published by Habibi is more recent, thus, in part, explaining the lack of archaicisms. His patron, the ruler of Qandahar, Shah Hussain Hotak, who had a poetic and literary *darbār* once a week in his palace at Narang, was himself a writer of poetry in Pashto and Persian. Another ruler who wrote in poetry was the famous Ahmad Shah Durrani of the Saddozai line, a frequent invader of India (died 1773). His *dīvān* of rather simple verses in the style of Rahman Baba was published in 1940 by the National Pashto Academy of Kabul (*da pashto tolena*).

The most important prose work of this period is *The Inlaid History of Jewels* (*tārīkh-i-murassa'*) by Afzal Khan Khatak, a descendent of Khushhal Khan and head of the tribe until about 1770. The work is a compilation principally dedicated to semi-historical legends about the origins of the Afghans But the history of the two centuries previous to Khushhal Khan Khatak is important to the study of modern periods. Afzal Khan was also the patriarch of a veritable dynasty of poets and writers. Another famous military chief who was also a poet is Hafiz Rahmat, governor of Rohil-Khand in India, a contemporary and ally of Ahmad Shah Durrani in his Indian enterprises. He was killed in battle in 1774 and buried at Bareilly. It is said that he gathered an extensive library of Pashto works; some of his sons such as Nawab Mahabbat Khan and Allah-yar Khan dedicated themselves to Pashto grammar and philology and compiled important grammars and lexicons. Among the poets of the other tribes, the proud Qasim Ali of the Afridi tribe is worthy of mention. It seems that, in addition to Pashto, he knew Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Kashmiri, Hindi and a bit of English. The consolidation of English influence in India caused him to exclaim in verse:

The Christians dominate India.
Oh, where are the noble swords of the warriors of yesteryear?

In the rich library of the Ismamia College in Peshawar, a copy of his *kulliyāt* ("complete works") is preserved with his autographic seal dated 1815. In addition to lyric poetry in various Islamic languages, the work contains a history of his Afridi tribe and an interesting glossary of Persian verbs translated into Pashto, Kashmiri, Urdu and English.

E. The Modern Period.

Pashto literature offers nothing of particular interest from 1834 until the modern Afghan renaissance of about 1931. The poets retain the traditional metaphor of the *ghazal* and of the Persian or Urdu *qasīda*, while the prose writers produce numerous historical and pseudo-historical compositions. However, it was in this particular period that the best popular poets flourished. It should be mentioned that popular Afghan literature is relatively recent, although, obviously, the subjects are traditional and from older periods.[10]

We mention, then, Munshi Ahmad Jan, founder of modern Pashto prose, who lived in the second half of the nineteenth century and wrote three volumes of salubrious and popular prose. They are entitled *ganj-i-pashto* ("Pashto treasures"), *gap* ("words") and *da hadga dagha* ("of this and that"). Another leader of the new school is Mir Ahmad Shah Rizvani, born in 1858 near Peshawar, a poet, prose writer, author of a Pashto grammar in Urdu, and a teacher at the colleges of Peshawar and at Punjab University, Lahore. From the Pashto area of Pakistan (Peshawar), there is also Mulla Nimatullah, called by some the "Pashto Firdausi," who was a specialist in romantic and epic poems. We spare the lay reader further names about which we can say little to nothing. One need only observe that prior to its birth within the political borders of Afghanistan, the renaissance of Pashto literature began in the Pashto-speaking province of British India, and, in large part, under English influence. The Pathans of present-day Afghanistan began their literary renaissance later under the influence of their Indian neighbors, especially during the rule of King Amanullah (1919-1929) and Nadir Shah (1929-1933). Pashto became the official language, together with Persian, in 1940, while in 1937, the Pashto Academy was established. The publication of texts, new editions of anthologies and grammars, cultural reviews, etc., has given strong impulse to Pashto literature in Afghanistan.

In Pakistan, the new literary school was especially reinforced from 1920 onwards with the founding of Islamia College at Peshawar through the efforts of Sir Abdul Quyyum Khan. This Pashto cultural beacon also attracts Afghans from beyond the borders to come in contact with new currents of European and Urdu literature. At the same time, another institution in Peshawar, Edwards College, exercised notable influence on the formation of a new generation of writers. From Islamia College came such writers as Sayyid Rasul Rasa, Fazl Haqq Shaida, Muhammad Askhraf Maftun, Shaukatullah Khan Akbar, Yunus Khalil; at Edwards College, writers such as Hidayatullah were instructed. Among the contemporary novelists are Abdul Karim Datmanzoe, Abdul Khaliq Khaliq, Gul Afzal, Zaitun Bano and Arab Khan, who more or less imitate the Urdu novel. Recent Pashto poetry has been influenced by the

social tendencies of English literature and by the great bards of Urdu such as Hali and Iqbal. In order to break old, formal and esthetic chains, a "message" poetry has been created on the basis of Islam, patriotism and liberty, which has its political and cultural values, but does not always attain the heights of beauty. A poet such as Sāmundar Khan Samundar (born 1900) has translated into Pashto the two programmatic poems of Iqbal, *The Secret of Self* and *The Mystery of Non-Self*,[11] and tries to wield classical imagination into new moods. In the following composition entitled "Separation," the imagery is so hackneyed that it risks losing all impression of freshness. In another sense, it is in the best tradition of the "Indian style" so much admired by Afghans, with the tendency to isolate a particular emotion and study it poetically in all aspects:

Departure was decided, a tear
The eyes' continuous weeping sent one to laughter,
Those eyes from which the flood of tears is spent,
But on a flowing tear danced a brilliant talisman, a light,
A tear whose scintillation goaded sleeping Destiny,
A tear, determined to leave,
A tear which would never stop again,
A tear interwoven with forests of threaded glances,
A tear which now, beneath a veil of collyrium, lanced rays of light.
Like a pearl which by the door of ancient seashell
Turns backward glances of goodbye,
Reassertion of sorrowing eyes said:
"I am going"
The arid eyelashes palpitated, fixing sadly on the clothes;
The travelling maiden caressed with emotion transparent veils of eyelashes
As if desiring to console a crying child
And said: "The pearl was always prized only when it parted from the mother.
How long must I remain hidden
In this, your gloom?
When I am no more, you will remain pledged, my love,
And I too will carry in pledge your love in my heart'"
And that scintillating moonlight of your eyes
I left, leaving my eyes spent and saddened;
I was only a drop, that tear but the value was no less than pearl:
How can I stand, O Samundar,[12] the parting of your precious company?

In an effort to be complete, the name of Agman Khan Khatak must be added to those previously mentioned. In his poetic composition, he interpreted the life and passions of workers and peasants. The major part of the works in contemporary Pashto literature is published in literary reviews such as Zhobe ("the father of rivers," an Afghan name for the Indus River) or in collections such as *dokor gulzar* ("basket of flowers"). Available space here prevents giving examples of the lines of poets thus far mentioned. Others, in my modest opinion, have not yet succeeded in equalling those vigorous works of some of the older classical or popular writers.[13]

F. Popular Literature.

Some special reference to popular literature is now appropriate. In this type of literature, one discovers at times gems for which one would search in vain in formal literature, oppressed as it sometimes is by the rhetoric and meter of the Persio-Arabic tradition. Popular literature has developed forms such as the *chārbaita*, the *misra'* or single verse, the *badla*, the *landaī*, and the *loba* ("play"), which are unknown, or almost unknown, to formal poetry which is usually composed in syllabic meter. The *ghazal* is also widely used among popular singers and is the principal lyric instrument of non-Arabic Muslim people. The popular poet-singer (*dom* in Pashto) is more often an Afghanicized Indian rather than a pure Pathan. There is even an occasional Hindu *dom*.[14] As with cultured literature, the center of diffusion for popular literature also seems to be mostly in the eastern part of the Afghan language area, that is, in Pakistan. From there, the latest songs are carried west by thousands of merchant caravans which cross the Sulaiman Mountains each season; thus, unity is preserved and songs born in Pakistan are soon known as far away as Qandahar. The popular themes are very abundant, but, as we said, not very old. They include epic-historic songs, religious songs and legends, romantic legends from the most varied sources, and an infinite number of love songs.

It is not easy to give examples within the brief space allotted, but the most vigorous are perhaps the songs of war and the laments, usually composed by women, about fallen heroes. This first example is a robust and ingenious song of the Waziri tribe of Mahsud:

> The heroes are fighting; Mulla Sahib is their chief.
> May God preserve him; he is a fragrant tree from the high hills. He has put the *perangai*[15] in chains and the English women in London are terrorized.

A curious contrast in these warrior songs are the vivid metaphors with which the heroes, "flowers," are described in the blood of battle. Another Waziri song states:

> Lalin has been killed. He was a rose of springtime. The houris of Paradise have gathered him with their fingers. He was only a boy, but when armed with his rifle, he was a young tiger.

Certain colorful impressions are recorded by ingenuous primitives:

> Asad Khan was a handsome tiger. He was a red *durānī* of Kabul with a yellow collar like a parrot -- but the English have plucked this beautiful budding flower.

The following is a *ghazal* by the popular poet, Mira, who was an exception to what we have said about the non-Afghan origins of the *dom*, for he was a pure Afghan of the Afridi tribe. The poem is known as *zakhmai* ("wounded") and is perhaps the best known of popular Afghan songs:

Wounded, I writhe in pain, wounded by the stab of separation.
You have stolen my heart and enclosed it in your hand, Kharo.
I am ever at war, always red with blood, always your supplicant, tender-tenderly.
Life oppresse me, and my loved one is my doctor, and I long for medicine, tender-tenderly.
Your breasts are fruit, sugar to the lips, and your white teeth are pearls;
All this is my love, and she has wounded my heart until I drowned in tears, tender-tenderly.
It is my reward to serve you, and worthy of you to hold me, O love, think of me always.
Night and day I pine at the door of your sanctuary, the first of your servants, tender-tenderly.
If you sing your verses, and you sing to another, well, can I call you thief?
Any *ghazal* you sing, O Mira, always praises God and puts evil words in bonds, tender-tenderly.

This next ballad (*chārbaita*) is remarkable for its style and also for the curious personality of the author, an insane *dom*, Muhammad-gi of Pakli, whom Darmesteter met in 1886 in the prison of Abbottabad. It is a strophic dialogue between a lover and his beloved, who is married to a disagreeable husband:

I. Last night I went for a stroll in the bazaar of black tresses,
I was entangled there like a fat bee, in the bazaar of black tresses.
Last night I went to stroll in the orchard of your tresses;
I was enmeshed there like a fat bee by the voluptuousness of your pomegranate-breasts;
I nibbled pure gold in the tenderness of your chin;
I breathed perfume from the flower garland around the neck of my queen, the garland of black tresses;
Last night I went for a stroll in the bazaar of black tresses.
I was entangled like a fat bee in the bazaar of black tresses.

II. You breathed the perfume of my garland, my lover, and you fell as if you had drunk *bhang*
And you slept like Bahran on Sarasya's bed.[16]
But in the end, someone will kill you for being the thief of my rosy cheeks!
Now the guard of the black tresses is furious about you.
Last night I went for a stroll in the bazaar of black tresses;
I was entangled like a fat bee in the bazaar of black tresses.

III. Is he really furious with me, little one? But God will surely know how to protect me.
Stretch out your black tresses like a cane to protect me.
Give me your white face; satiate me with sugar, like a parrot;
Let me enter the granary of black tresses!
Last night I went for a stroll in the bazaar of black tresses.
I was entangled there like a fat bee, in the bazaar of black tresses.

IV. I will let you enter, my lover, the garden of my white breasts;
But then you will rebel and leave me disdainfully.
When I unveil my white face, I extinguish the light from my lamp.
O, God, bring me beautiful adornment for my black tresses.
Last night I went for a stroll in the bazaar of black tresses.
I was entangled like a fat bee in the bazaar of black tresses.

V. God has given you great beauty, beauty without equal,
But throw me at least a glance, O beautiful one, for I am your servant.
Yesterday at the first blush of dawn I sent you my faithful messenger.
O, how the serpent has stricken my heart, the serpent of black tresses.
Last night I went for a stroll in the bazaar of black tresses;
I was entangled like a fat bee in the bazaar of black tresses.

VI. I will charm the serpent with a magic breath, for I am a clever enchantress.
But, poor wretch, I am torn to pieces for your honor.
Come, let us flee from Pakli; I cannot stand the brute any longer.
And I will give you full rights over my black tresses!
Last night I went for a stroll in the bazaar of black tresses;
I was entangled there like a fat bee, in the bazaar of black tresses.

It is with regret that we put aside the translation of the above excerpts which, with their essential poetic value, are worthy of being included with the most renowned literature. But, we cannot do less than cite some *misra's*, expressions in a single line, of fleeting sentiments and images:

Come, we can still make up; Death is pursuing and only half the night remains.

What destiny prescribes can never be changed, even if the dead tree should sprout leaves again.

When, from afar, I reunite with your braids, the perfume is like a gentle breeze and I flower like a rose.

Or, this beautiful *misra'* for a dead love which seems to deny the traditional image of the fierce and warlike Pathan:

If into your dark tomb a subtle path were sent,
Then to my love would I roses present.

NOTES

1. The name "Afghan" is Persian in origin, but the etymology is still not clear.

2. For example, *zah* = "I" continues the Avestan nominative *azem*, while modern Persian has generalized the pronoun with an old Persian oblique form, *man*.

3. Pashto phonetics, differentiating from old Iranian languages, recognizes the occlusive cacuminals.

4. Collections of biographies of poets, accompanied by samples of their works.

5. Translated from a letter of Morgenstierne, a copy of which he very kindly sent me.

6. *za'i* in Pashto means "son of" and corresponds to the Persian *zādā*.

7. One should not forget that Babur conquered India and did away with the Afghan Lodi Dynasty.

8. In all the Muslim literature, the merit of having made the local language flourish in place of Arabic was due especially to the popular mystics who had obvious motives in propagating religion.

9. Editors' note: a review by Annemarie Schimmel of D. N. Mackenzie's *Poems from the Divan of Khushal Khan Kattak*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1965, 288 pp., appears in *Mahfil*, IV, 2, 57-58,

10. Translator's note: the use of *letteratura populare*, "popular literature," is imprecisely presented in this article. The author is unclear as to what "popular literature" means. Folk literature? "Popular" in the sense of "modern," as opposed to "classical?" "Popular" as opposed to "unpopular?" The usage in this article needs to be examined with some attempt at definition, although the author has given none.

11. Editors' note: these books are available in English translation: *Secrets of the Self*, tr. R. A. Nicholson (London, 1920); *Mysteries of Selflessness*, tr. A. J. Arberry (London, 1954).

12. *samundar* literally means "sea" and the sea contains pearls.

13. Translator's note: here a distinction seems to be made between "popular" as opposed to "classical," but is not the same as the definition of the word used elsewhere in the essay.

14. Darmesteter has given some examples.

15. Literally, "Franks," and by extension, the English.

16. Reference to a romantic story of Persian origin well known throughout the Muslim world.

Annemarie Schimmel

SINDHI LITERATURE

A brief sketch of a sadly underrated literature

Over a century ago, in 1866, the first critical edition of a work of Sindhi literature was published in Europe. In that year the German missionary Ernest Trumpp (A.D. 1813-1885) brought out, in a very fine and careful edition, the *risālō* of Shāh 'Abdul Laṭīf in the publishing house of Brockhaus, Leipzig. Then in 1872, the same scholar published his standard work on the *Grammar of the Sindhi Language* in London.[1] But since his time, the study of the Sindhi language and literature has again been deplorably neglected by Western scholars. Little has changed since Trumpp complained:

> Among the recent languages of India that are of Sanscritic origin, none has been more neglected by the public interest than Sindhi. . . . Sindhi has been, since ever, the most despised language among the Indian vernaculars; even the old grammaticians of Prakrit have scarcely thought that it deserves mention.[2]

And yet, the field of Sindhi literature is more vast than that of many other Indo-Pakistani languages. Sir Richard Burton is quite correct when he writes that "no vernacular dialect in India . . . possessed more, and few so much, original composition."[3]

The Gazetteer (22/1908) stated shortly that Sindhi literature consists mainly of translations from Arabic and Persian, chiefly theological works, and of a few rude national ballads (p. 406). Nothing could be farther from the truth. We know from the Arabic geographers, as, for instance, Ibn Hauqal, that already in the first centuries after the conquest of the lower Indus Valley by Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim (A.D. 711), considerable literary activity was visible in the centers of this province. And although we are only in a position to know some relics of the Arabic works which were composed either in Sind or by Sindhi scholars in the Arabian countries, we do know from the geographers' witnesses that a local language was spoken as well (and probably also used in writing); though we do not know how much older than present-day Sindhi was that language into which -- according to Buzurg ibn Shahriyar's *ajā'ib al-Hind* -- the legendary king of Rāhad translated the Quran in A.H.270/A.D.883.[4]

The first literary pieces in Sindhi date to the sixteenth century -- small verses of mystical meaning, in an extremely condensed and difficult form like those of Qādī Qādan.[5] It is even said that the group of mystics who migrated during the wars between Humāyūn and Shēr Shāh Lōdī from Sind to Burhānpūr in Central India used to recite in their *samā* session verses in their mother tongue.[6] This shows again the paramount influence the mystics have had, in all parts of the Islamic world and elsewhere, upon the literary development of the spoken folk languages. It was their aim to express their feelings of love and ecstasy, of longing and of wisdom in words which even the simple ploughman and fisherman could understand, instead of using the theological Arabic (or, in Europe, Latin) or the court language, Persian. We can also judge from small historical allusions in Sindhi folk songs and ballads that they must belong to a far earlier period, and there is no doubt that the great classical romances of the Indus Valley were well known among the people at least in the sixteenth century. This can be proved in relation to a story, *Hīr Rānjhā*,[7] which is better known in the Punjab than in Sind; the same is also highly possible with the famous folk stories of *Mōmal Rānō*, *Sassui Punhun*, *Sohnī Mehanwāl*, and surely with *Nūrī Tamāci*, the story of the love of a Samma' Prince and a fishermaid into which some strands of the old Indian fairy tale of the "Princess with the Smell of Fish" may have been interwoven.

The great mystics of Thatta, the flourishing capital of Lower Sind, must have used their native tongue in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in addition to the learned Persian, in which they composed verses according to the classical form with the inherited imagery of Persian mystical poetry whose main influence comes from Maulānā Jalāluddīn Rūmī's inexhaustable *mathnawī* but also from the works of Farīduddīn Attār. Jāmī's influence, too, is visible in several verses. The great treasures of Persian poetry in Sind were collected in the eighteenth century by Mīr 'Alī Shīr Qānī' of Thatta (d.A.D 1781) in his *maqālāt ash-shu'arā*, which was continued by a member of the same family (who were stern adherents of the Naqshibandī tarīqa), Muhammad Ibrāhīm Khalīl Thattā'ī (d.A.D 1899) in the *takmilat maqālāt ash-shu'arā*.[8] The great stars of the galaxy of Islamic mysticism shined also over the songs and ballads that were written by the Sindhi mystics in their native tongue.

The first great period of Sindhi literature proper begins around A.D. 1700. At that time the learned scholars of Thatta, headed by Makdūm Muhammad Hāshim, started writing theological treatises in Sindhi poetry, rather artless poetry in this writer's opinion, using the simple means of filling up the ends of the rhymes by a rhyming long ā, the *alif al-ishbā*. But these comparatively simple and artless poems which were easy to learn by heart left a deep impression on Sindhi literature, and the legend around the miracles of the Prophet, as told by Makhdūm Muhammad Hāshim (A.D.1692-1761), belonged to the first works in Sindhi that were printed after the establishment of the Muhammadi Press in Bombay in 1867. They are still preserved in the numerous collections of pious books of *mu'jizāt*, *munājāt* and *maulāh*, as the different types of devotional poetry are called.

In addition to these, Makhdūm Muḥammad Hāshim and one of his adversaries in theology, the more mystically inclined Miān Abū'l-Hasan, were also busy with writing commentaries on the Holy Quran in their mother tongue -- these, again, in the same rhymed style as the legend.[9] The *tafsīr hāshimī* was read and reread for centuries in Sind, and was printed in 1857 by the above-mentioned press.

The first great star of Sindhi poetry about whom we are fully informed and who is still today venerated as one of the greatest saints and poets of the country, is Shāh 'Abdul Latīf of Bhit (A.D.1689-1752). Until a few years ago, he was even considered the first to give Sindhi mystical poetry its special flavor and rich form. However, Dr. Nabi Bakhsh Baloch, the indefatigable investigator into the literary treasures of his home province, has found mystical poetry from the pen of 'Ināt, who lived in the second half of the seventeenth century and who may be safely called a forerunner of Shāh Latīf.[10] But the poetry of Shāh 'Abdul Latif[11] combined in itself so many high qualities and was set into music by the poet himself in such a way that it immediately captured the heart of the people. In a time of utter distress, when the dynasty of the Kalhoro was struggling against the strange and fascinating personality of Shāh 'Ināyat Shahid of Jhōk (executed A.D.1717), when Nādir Shāh invaded the Indus Valley and later when the Afghan ruler Ahmad Shāh Durrānī entered the country, Shāh 'Abdul Latīf took up the old Sindhi folk stories, the ballads, and made them centers of his meditation. The soul searching for God is seen in the garb of Sohnī who swims every night to the island where her beloved is watching the cows whose shining eyes serve as candles for the courageous girl. But one evening her sister-in-law substitutes an unbaked pot for the water jug she uses to swim with. The unbaked earthenware crumbles in the water and poor Sohnī is drowned, united only in death with her beloved who follows her into the river's depth. The soul is also Sassui, who is in love with the Prince of Kech. But his brothers take him away at night, and she, awaking from the "slumber of negligence," finds the bed empty and follows him from Bhambhore into the desert, running towards the far-away Baloch mountains until she dies from thirst. And it is as well Marui, who is captured by the rich ruler of Umarkot but remains faithful to her beloved in the home village, just as the human soul should refrain from all earthly happiness in order to be reunited with her Beloved in the eternal homeland.

It is, however, not only that Shāh Latīf takes these well known stories and shows the heroine always in the moment of crisis, thus expressing the soul's most intense yearning for the eternal Beloved, but that he has also depicted in the same poetry the beauty of the country and the problems of the common people. He sings of the seafarer's wife who waits for the boat which should return from Ceylon, laden with precious stones, cinnamon and other spices, unless the Europeans (the Portuguese invaded Sind and sacked Thatta in A.D.1555) capture it. And he knows the longing of the lonely wife who waits in the straw-covered hut for her husband to cover her again with his love. He uses as well the symbol of

the spinning wheel, which is very common in Punjabi mystical poetry for the constant meditation of God and the performance of good deeds.[12] He leads us through the desert where a crumbled little tree stands beside a former water course and we wander with him and a group of yogins (who are made the revelation places of Divine Grace) towards Mount Hinglach. Perhaps the most touching chapter in the whole *risālō* is the "Sūr Sārang," where he describes the countryside longing for rain. But here rain is not only the water of the clouds, but also the *raḥma*, Divine Grace which manifests itself in the Prophet who was sent *raḥmatan lil'ālamīn*.[13]

Shāh 'Abdul Latīf's work is, of course, filled with allusions to classical Sufi poetry, and again it is Rūmī whom he praises more than anyone else and to whom he is, no doubt, deeply indebted. Rūmī's *mathnawī* together with the Quran, was his favorite and perhaps only reading book, according to some traditions (we are told the same thing, by the way, about other Sindhi mystics also). Small wonder that his work has been commented upon by both Muslims and Hindus. The Hindus have always regarded the mystic of Bhit as a representative of all-embracing mystical unity and love, whereas he never denies his Muslim roots, even though he highly praises the yogins. Thus, Ernest Trumpp was correct when he chose the *risālō* as the first work to be edited with critical notes, though in several articles on Sindhi and on certain parts of the *risalo*, he did not conceal his deep antipathy against these expressions of mysticism which were, for a Protestant missionary like himself, rather horrid. The text he gives differs from other editions in the order of the verses or of the chapters; and since the *risālō* is meant for recitation and singing, it will always be difficult to constitute a text which is generally accepted as to the sequence of the verses and so on. But these small differences do not matter for the understanding of the whole grand work.

Shāh 'Abdul Latīf is still the beacon light of Sindhi poetry and literature. One frequently meets allusions to his work, and the *risālō* is recognized by all parts of the population as the unsurpassable model of mystical poetry. He is the national poet par excellence whose verses lend themselves easily for quotations on any occasion. And no doubt the Sindhis are justified in their pride. Even the foreigner who will always have some difficulties in understanding the grammatically complicated constructions and the partly obsolete words will agree that his hard work is richly rewarded by the depth and beauty of Shāh's poetry.

Other great heralds of mystical love and union followed Shāh 'Abdul Latīf, maintaining thus the noble tradition of mysticism that had already flourished since the Middle Ages in the Indus Valley. Is it a sheer accident that the name of the greatest mystic in the Arabic tongue, al-Husain ibn Mansūr al-Hallāj, who wandered through Sind in A.D.905, is found in nearly all expression of mystical poetry throughout the country? Hallāj had proudly admitted the union of the uncreated and created spirit in the rare moments of ecstasy, proclaiming, then, his *anā'l-Haqq*, "I am the Absolute Truth." He was killed in A.D.922 by the orthodox judges in Baghdad, undefended by his own fellow-mystics. He is praised in Sindhi mystical poetry as the martyr of love and has become, since Shāh 'Ināyat Shahid and Shāh 'Abdul Latīf, synonymous with the mystic's longing for martyrdom for the sake of love, as well as for the eternal struggle between

orthodoxy and those who confess the unity of all Being.[14] Thus, Hallāj is a favorite symbol in the poems of Sachal Sarmast (A.D.1751-1826), the great mystic who is second only to Shāh Laṭīf.[15] But, whereas the mystic of Bhit conceals the mystical meaning in complicated symbols and rarely opens his heart to express the mysteries of mysticism aloud, Sachal, whose pen name is Āshikār ("open"), sings without restriction the deepest secrets of love and union. He, too, relies often upon the great folk tales, but his poetry is more fluent, more ardent, than that of Shāh and reminds the reader of the poems of popular Turkish mystics, beginning from Yūnus Emre (d.A.D.1321). In never-ending dithyrambs -- be they in Sindhi, Siraiki (the northern dialect which leads already over to Punjabi) or Persian -- he pours out the intense love of his heart, complains that God always makes those He loves suffer, teases the orthodox, and yet sees One in all the different manifestations of being:

> Thou are Mansūr (i.e. Hallāj),
> and Thou made him suffer
> and Thou art again the *mollas* .

It would be easy to enumerate a long line of mystical poets who, after the example of Shāh Latīf and Sachal, continued spreading their ideas in the country, yet always reverting to the classical models. Bēdil of Rohrī (A.D.1814-1872),[16] Hammal Leghārī (A.D.1809-1896),[17] and many others are famous for their *dīwān* and for their ecstatic sayings. And the simple country folk still preserve many verses of strong mystical beauty without remembering their authors.

On the other hand, the first half of the nineteenth century saw in Sind a certain tendency towards more sophisticated forms and content of poetry. Whereas the great poets of the Talpur court, like Ziyā Tattawī (d.A.D. 1814) and Azīm (A.D.1750-1815), composed artificial Persian *mathnawīs* on subjects from folklore, other Sindhi poets began introducing the difficult Arabo-Persian form of the *ghazal* into their mother tongue. Thus, the Sindhi *ghazal*, with all the rules of rhyme and rhythm, was cultivated instead of the simpler but purer old forms of the *wāy* or *kāfī*.

The British conquest of Sind in 1843 is perhaps the most important event during that century, and its impact on literature cannot be overrated. With their method of abolishing Persian as the official language in the subcontinent and the encouragement of the regional languages, the British first provided Sindhi with a proper alphabet. The language had until that time been written in the different script systems of the country: Arabic, with or without additional dots (which was extremely difficult, due to the great number of dentals which could not be discerned in the proper way), Devanagari, Gurmukhi, and several other systems. Sir Bartle Frere introduced a modified Arabic alphabet with many additional dots in order to show correctly the dentals in which Sindhi is so extremely rich. Though Ernest Trumpp did not completely agree with the system,[18] still preferring in his edition of the *risālo* and in the *Grammar* a slightly different system of Arabic with additional dots, the alphabet of Sir Bartle Frere soon became commonly accepted, even though the Hindus still continued the use of the Devanagari script. The first printing presses were opened in Bombay,

then in Sukkur, Hyderabad and other cities. After a short while not only religious textbooks and classical pious legends of the Prophet were printed there, but also the productions of the Hindus of Sind, until all activities of translating and writing converged, so to speak, in a single person, Mīrzā Qalīch Beg of Hyderabad (A.D.1853-1929).[19]

A glance at Billimoria's work *Bibliography of Sind* suffices to see how great a share is Mīrzā Qalīch Beg's in building up a Sindhi prose literature in readable style which would be attractive to both men and women. The Mirza, coming himself from Caucaso-Turkish stock, had set before himself the ideal of adapting as much as possible of world literature into his native tongue. His son writes:

> In order to fill the deep gap of Sindhi poetry and prose, he has deeply investigated the different books of both Eastern and Western poets and scholars, literates and excellent men, philosophers and mystics, gnostics and rationalists, has translated their prosaic and poetical jewels into fluent Sindhi, and has put them before us -- and there is no subject or title upon which he has not turned his pen.

There is, indeed, nearly nothing between Shakespeare (whom he retold) and Old Babylon, between the German War and Christoph von Schmid's *Blumenkörbchen*, between the *Art of Gardening* and Smile's *Self-Help*, or between Sherlock Holmes and Bacon, which he did not translate into Sindhi. His style was pleasant and easy, even though (or because) he translated almost all the books without paying too great an attention to stylistic problems. More than 300 books emerged from his pen; not only translations, but also numerous products of his own -- novels, poems and plays. It is especially worth mentioning that *mīrzā* Qalīch Beg belonged to the great advocates of female education. His novel *ainat* deals with this problem in a very able manner, and shows the advantages of a girl's being literate and capable to work for herself when her husband is away or if she is a widow. Though this novel is modelled after the Urdu classic in this field, the *mir'āt al-arūs*, I feel that it is much better written and is, at least in the first half, very successful even from today's point of view.[20]

At the same time and shortly after Mīrzā Qalīch Beg, other writers took up the aim of writing scholarly prose in the field of history and poetry, and the growing number of newspapers in the province was a good platform for writers in every field. But it was only after Partition that the Muslim writers of Sind made new attempts at forming their own literary style and doing useful work for their country. The Sindhi Hindus, whose literary center in India is now Bombay, have shown remarkable activity in the field of modern short stories in India;[21] but the Pakistani Muslims of Sind are equally active. We find among them gifted

writers who take up a variety of subjects. And many of them, as is often the case in developing countries, indulge in social criticism, not in a very belligerent form, but rather with hidden bitterness. An excellent story is that of Jamal Abro, "With Blackened Face," which shows the problem of a pious man who has, however, robbed the silken cover of a Pīr's tomb in order to get money for a doctor for his only child. The author here criticizes very intensely the veneration of the dead bones of so-called saints (for which Sind is renowned), whereas the poor are forgotten and thrown into the depths of misery. With regard also to style and expression, this story is very impressive. Other authors have concentrated upon satire and lighter jokes; others have a more romantic strain even in their social criticism.[22] Poetry as well has started adopting new, modern forms, and has sometimes reached beautiful expression of sentiment.

But whereas modern literature as a whole is still in the making, the scientific research that is going on in this part of Pakistan is of a remarkable degree. The Sindhi Adabi Board, which was founded in 1952 in Karachi[23] and is now located in Hyderabad, has brought out more than 200 books, partly new impressions of Sindhi classics -- for instance, the most important stories and translations done by Mīrzā Qalīch Beg -- and also a number of volumes on the history of Sind, the first of them being the English book by H. T. Lambrick, *Sind, A General Introduction* (1965). Important classical sources, such as the *chāchnāme* (the eldest chronicle about the conquest of Sind, a Persian translation of the lost Arabic original), have been made available in Sindhi and partly also in Urdu translations; classical Persian authors have been re-edited or newly edited as well. Critical articles by many scholars show the high standard of Sindhi prose. A series which is especially welcome to the scholar of linguistics, the historian of religions, and to the specialist in folklore is the *sindhi lōk adab* the Sindhi Folklore Series.[24] We have already mentioned some of its volumes which contain classical and popular poems on the Prophet and the saints, poems which show the large imagination of the great devout poets, as well as of the simple country folk. In a further examination of the collection we find a volume of folk ballads -- the motifs of some of them going back to the Middle Ages -- which relate the important events of Sindhi history, both medieval and modern. For example, the opening of the Sukkur Barage in 1932, which caused such a drastic change in the social fabric of Upper Sind, or the events of World War II when words like "control" and "blackmarket" were introduced in phonetic transcription into the ballads, and finally the election of President Ayub Khan are all included. From this it may be seen that the old art of poetry as a kind of journalism quite common all over the East in the past, is still existent in the Lower Indus Valley. Another volume contains marriage songs, and with them Dr. Baloch has explained every single moment of the marriage ceremonies.[25] A charming volume is devoted to riddles and enigmas, a kind of popular poetry which is most amusing and sometimes very vexing. There is also a collection of a poetical forms that are peculiar to Sind and the Punjab (*tīh akarīūn*), the *siharfī*, or "golden alphabet," which has been used by the great poets as well as by minor singers for expressing their ideas so that people could easily memorize them since each verse, or couplet

or stanza begins with a letter of the alphabet. Again a kind of folk poetry common to the whole western wing of Pakistan are the "Day- and Night-Poems," where a story is told in a way that the poet says:

On the first day they did . . .
On the second day they did. . . .

or:

In April they did . . .
In May they did. . . .

This is an effective way of composing love songs, and also, especially in the "monthly" form, religious poetry, each month being combined with an event from the life of the Prophet or of his family. Another valuable collection inside the folklore series is the folk tales. They comprise already eight volumes and are not yet exhausted. It is, however, high time to collect all these treasures before modern life will cause them to fall into oblivion.

Sindhi literature is a strange phenomenon. Although the Sindhi-speaking population of the province consists only of from four to five million, the number of newspapers in Sindhi (more than sixty) comes only after Urdu and Bengali papers. Lastly, even though the percentage of illiteracy was reported to be very high[26] in this nearly completely rural area, the knowledge of poetry is extremely widespread. Even in the smallest villages the songs of Shāh 'Abdul Latīf are well known, and the name of that German scholar who first published his *risālō*, that of Ernest Trumpp, is honored by the Sindhis as much as that of Max Muller is in India.

NOTES

1. Cf. Schimmel, *Ernst Trumpp. A Brief Account of His Life and Work.* Karachi: Pak-German Forum, 1961. The first book Trumpp brought out in Sindhi was the *Sindhi Reading Book in the Sanscrit and Arabic Characters*, London: Church Missionary Society, 1858.

2. *ZDMG*, 15/1861, p. 692 ff.

3. *Sindh and the Races That Inhabit the Valley of the Indus* (London, 1851)

4. Ed. Paris 1872, p. 2.

5. For the whole development of Sindhi literature, see the small but very useful booklet in Urdu by Pir Hussamuddin Rashdi, *sindhī adab* Karachi s.d., upon which A. Bausani, in the *Storia delle letterature del Pakistan* (Milan, 1958), has based his chapter on Sindhi. About the language the book of Sir Bheeromal Mehrchand Advani (A.D.1876-1953), *sindhī bolī'a jī tarīkh* is very useful.

6. Cf. Rashid Burhanpuri, *burhanpur kē sindhī auliyā* (Karachi, 1956).

7. Cf. Hafeez Hoshyarpuri, *mathnaviyāt-e mīr mānjhū* (Karachi, 1957).

8. Qāni's *maqālāt ash-shu'arā* have been edited by Pir Hussamuddin Rashdi in 1956; the same scholar has also edited his most interesting *mukīī-nāme* in the quarterly *mihran*, 1956; a new enlarged edition is expected. H. Rashdi has further edited Khalīl's *takmilat maqālāt ash-shu'arā* in 1958. Cf. also H. I. Sadarangani, *persian poets of sind* (Karachi, 1956).

9. A Schimmel, "Translations and Commentaries of the Qur'an in Sindhi Language," in *Orients*, 16/1963.

10. *shāh 'abd al-latīf bhit jō kalām*, ed. by Dr. N. B. Baloch (Hyderabad, 1963).

11. The most comprehensive book is that of H. T. Sorley, *Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit* (Oxford, 1940; see my review of this volume in *Mahfil*, IV, 2:50-52 (1968)). An Urdu verse translation has been done by Shaykh Ayaz, a renowned poet in Sindhi and Urdu (Hyderabad, 1965). Parts of the *risālō* have been translated into English by Elsa Kazi (Hyderabad, 1965).

12. Cf. L. Rama Krishna, *Panjabi Sufi Poets* (Calcutta, 1940).

13. Cf. A. Schimmel, "The Veneration of the Prophet Muhammad as Reflected in Sindhi Poetry," in *The Saviour God*, ed. by S. G. F. Brandon (Manchester, 1963).

14. Cf. A. Schimmel, "The Martyr-Mystic Hallaj in Sindhi Folk Poetry. Notes on a Mystical Symbol," Numen, IX, 3 (1963).

15. His *sindhī dīvān* was edited in 1958 by Othman Ali Ansari; his Siraiki verses in 1959 by Maulawi Hakim Muhammad Sadiq Ranipuri.

16. Ed by Abdul Husain Shah Musawi (Karachi, 1954).

17. Ed. by Dr. N. B. Baloch (Karachi, 1953).

18. He writes (*ZDMG*, 15/1861, p. 697, note 1): "Shortly before my arrival, a British civil servant had composed a new Arabic alphabet and obtruded it upon the country, an alphabet which must be called the silliest of all. . . ."

19. Cf. A. Schimmel, "The Activities of the Sindhi Adabi Board," *Welt des Islam*, NS VI, 3-4: 236. A friend called him "a book-making machine."

20. A. Schimmel, "Ein Frauenbildungsroman auf Sindhi: Mirza Qalich Beg's 'Zīnāt,'" Islam, 39/1965.

21. Cf. *Modern Indian Literature*, ed. Sahitya Academy (Delhi, 1958).

22. A collection of modern Pakistani short stories in German translation containing three Sindhi stories (including Kamal Abro's *"munhun kārō"* ("With a Blackened Face")) has been published by Horst Erdmann Verlag (Herrenalb, 1966); for an English translation of this story, see p. 153 of this issue; for a review of this of the volume, see p. 161.

23. Cf. the article in *Welt des Islam*, VI, 3-4.

24. A. Schimmel, "Neue Veröffentlichungen zur Volkskunde von Sind," *Welt des Islam*, NS IX/1964.

25. A. Schimmel, "Hochzeitslieder der Frauen im Industal," *Zeitschrift für Volkskunde*, 61/1965.

26. Cf. D. N. Wilber, *Pakistan* (New Haven, 1964); A. Schimmel, *Pakistan, Ein Schloss mit tausend Toren* (Zurich, 1965).

David D. Anderson

AHMED ALI AND *TWILIGHT IN DELHI*

The genesis of a Pakistani novel

In August, 1939, just before the outbreak of World War II, a young Indian Muslim writer arrived in London with the manuscript of his first novel and embarked on the embryo novelist's most difficult task: finding a publisher. The young man already enjoyed a reputation of sorts and a measure of notoriety in India as a writer of *avant-garde*, often somewhat subversive short stories in Urdu. This novel, written in English, had been solicited and then rejected by an American publisher who had read part of it in *The Atlantic Monthly*.

The young writer was Ahmed Ali, now one of the most important figures in the Pakistan literary establishment as well as one of that country's most influential writers working in both English and Urdu. The novel was *Twilight in Delhi*, destined to be significant and influential in contributing to the fusion of two cultures. Western English culture, colored strongly by post-Darwinian determinism and pessimism, is merged with the Eastern Muslim culture that combines a reverence for life with a sense of hope. This fusion has become particularly important in the Pakistani literary tradition that has begun to emerge in the course of this generation. That the novel was written in English was of significance in 1939, in those last days of the British raj, as Ahmed Ali sought a publisher and a wider audience than the Muslim population of India alone could provide: but actually the language is unimportant; not only do the ideas merge easily and logically, but Ahmed Ali's grace and facility in prose is equally evident in both languages.

Although E. M. Forster read the typescript of *Twilight in Delhi* shortly after Ahmed Ali arrived in London and compared it favorably with *A Passage to India*, a position that he later reiterated in the preface to the Everyman's Library edition of that novel, the subject matter of *Twilight in Delhi* and the outbreak of war threatened to prevent its publication. The Hogarth Press had accepted it for publication, but the printers, conscious of the subversive implications of much of the background, insisted that they could not print it. The printers demanded revision; John Lehmann of Hogarth tended to compromise, and Ahmed Ali, supported by Forster, refused. It appeared that *Twilight in Delhi* would not be published, at least not by Hogarth at that time.

Ultimately, however, the apparent impasse was resolved when Forster approached Desmond McCarthy about the problem, and McCarthy approached Virginia Woolf, who took it to Harold Nicholson, then Official Censor.

Nicholson read the book, saw nothing dangerous to the safety of the Empire in it, and passed it. The printers withdrew their objections, the book was published, but not until after Ahmed Ali had returned to India late in 1940.

This sort of controversy was not new to Ahmed Ali, however; in fact, it is conceivable, in the light of the increasingly strained relations between England and India at that time, that Ahmed Ali's reputation within the progressive Urdu literary movement was at least partly responsible for his difficulty in England. In the late Thirties, at the time he had begun to work on *Twilight in Delhi*, he was a contributor, together with such other young Urdu fiction writers as Sajjad Zaheer, Rashid Jahan, Akhtar Husain Raipuri, and Mahmuduz Zafar, to the anthology of short stories *Angarey* ("the blazing cinders"), which met a good deal of critical approval among literary progressives, much disapproval from traditionalists, and ultimately proscription by the British government of India because it contained matter "offensive to public morality."

Shortly thereafter, Ahmed Ali published *Sholay* ("the flames"), his own collection of stories and that with which his literary reputation began. In it was "Hamari Gali" ("our lane"). Like his earlier-published story "Mahavaton Ki Ek Raat" ("one rainy night of winter"), "Hamari Gali" is a milestone in the history of Urdu literature. Two of the finest stories in Urdu, they have been widely translated, and they are among the most influential short stories in the development of Urdu and English fiction in pre-independence India as well as in the growth of the new literature of Pakistan.

Both stories also combine to shed a good deal of light on the genesis of *Twilight in Delhi*. "Mahavaton Ki Ek Raat" is primarily important for its technical experimentations and innovations, particularly in the use of a subjective point of view that explores the psychological dimensions of Ahmed Ali's Muslim Indian people. Concurrently he experimented with the stream of consciousness technique in this and other stories of the period, thus providing the technical foundation for his later short fiction and ultimately for *Twilight in Delhi*.

"Mahavaton Ki Ek Raat" contains another innovation that was to be important in following stories, in the novel, and ultimately in the development of modern fiction in the vernaculars of Urdu and Bengali as well as English in the subcontinent. This innovation was a fusion of the Western techniques and form of the short story with the Eastern tradition of the orally-told tale. Thus, the story merges the intensity of control that characterizes modern fiction at its best with the sweeping, sometimes meandering panorama of the human predicament that makes up the best of the old; philosophically the story combines the East's acceptance of the inevitability of the life cycle, the Western awareness of the deterministic nature of that cycle, and the Muslim conviction that somehow there is an elusive meaning beyond it all.

The experimental nature of "Mahavaton Ki Ek Raat" makes it ultimately less satisfactory than "Hamari Gali," the short story that, in effect, is *Twilight in Delhi* in microcosm. In the background of "Hamari Gali" is the Non-cooperation Movement, inspired by Gandhi, that led to confrontations between Indians and British and ultimately to bloodshed. Several of the

characters in the story appear in the novel, including Nisar Ahmed, the muezzin of the *mohallah* or neighborhood of Delhi, whose voice, calling the faithful to prayer, provides a note of permanence and depth, and Mirzah, the milk vendor, whose son is killed by the British troops in one of their confrontations. Mirza is a major figure here; particularly important is his acceptance of the inevitability of tragedy and of a wisdom greater than his, somewhere beyond the neighborhood and the city. Significant, too, is the narrator, the young man who wonders, without conclusion, what force will clear up the debris left by inevitability, wisdom, and perhaps power. Together with his continuation of the earlier experimental techniques and attitudes, in this story Ahmed Ali began the exploration of the *mohallah* that in *Twilight in Delhi* was to become the microcosm of Delhi itself, of India, and of the eternal confrontation between time and eternity at the point in the history of men, cities, and empires that is forever twilight.

As in "Hamari Gali," the background of *Twilight in Delhi* is the first two decades of the twentieth century, those years during which Indian nationalism had at last begun to recover from the defeat and humiliation of 1857. But the nationalistic background is only part of the much broader background of life, epitomized in the decline in the physical and moral fibre of a Muslim businessman of Delhi, his family, and the world of which he is intimately a part.

The merchant is Mir Nihal, prosperous, successful, and secure in his own personal life, particularly because of two promising sons and his businesses, which need little of his attention. He finds fulfillment with his attractive, young mistress, Babban Jan, and in his favorite hobby, flying his pigeons with skill and daring. In many respects he and his way of life represent the epitome of success for the well-born head of a Syed household of Delhi.

The city itself is the most recent of a succession of cities and civilizations, and, according to Mir Nihal, the best. But it was about to be replaced by the alien British as they prepared to hold the great Coronation Durbar for George, King-Emperor, and as they began to build what they considered the eighth and greatest of the Delhis by pulling down the old Moghul walls that had given unity and identity to the city Mir Nihal had known and loved. When the Chandni Chowk, the main thoroughfare of the old city, was modernized and widened for the Durbar and the new city by destroying the old peepal trees that had sheltered generations of the city's inhabitants, modernity did indeed come to Delhi. At that time the Delhi of the Moghul past began to give way to the twentieth century at the expense of the city's identity, uniqueness, and sense of continuity. However, many of its inhabitants hoped and a few predicted that British might in India was also entering its twilight years.

Ahmed Ali uses this historical-cultural-symbolic complex as background, with the people of the *mohallah* in the foreground and the family of Mir Nihal center stage as the story of decline unfolds. Through the illness and death of Babban Jan, his loss of interest in his pigeons, the marriage of his younger son Asghar to a girl of lower status, the illness of his wife, his own crippling stroke, and the death of his older son Habibuddin, Mir Nihal passes from active participant in the dramatic life

of the city to frustrated observer to helpless, despairing cripple. Yet, as Ahmed Ali makes clear, life--the life of man and of the city--continued to go on relentlessly, unconscious of any change or disruption.

The merger of the life of Mir Nihal's family and of the city itself is, with Ahmed Ali's facile style and subtle evocation of permanence within change, one of the major strengths of the novel. Unlike much of the oral tradition out of which many of Ahmed Ali's techniques have evolved, his characters in *Twilight in Delhi*, as in "Hamari Gali," are fully dimensional, recognizable human beings rather than stereotypes for plot purposes or symbols for moral or philosophic purposes. Remarkably, this clear characterization is not limited to the major characters, but it extends also to the minor but never shadowy characters who provide much of the panoramic life of the novel and of the city itself. Beggars, merchants, craftsmen, professional mourners, the ruined descendants of the last of the Moghul emperors, even the cats who stalk fancy pigeons and discarded milk cups with indiscriminate fervor, are all part of the Delhi that has gone on to triumph over seven empires simply by absorbing and outliving each of them. The implication is clear: the city, like life itself, will outlive and outlast the most recent, the city of the British, which, like the others, promises a new eternal city. This city, like those of the past, fails to perceive or understand the true immortality of a place and its people.

Ahmed Ali ties the novel firmly into that immortality by recreating the customs of courtship, marriage, birth, and death that have given the people identity and unity for a millenium and that, in spite of Asghar's adoption of English dress and his willingness to marry beneath him, promise to endure for at least that much longer. The date palm that stands in Mir Nihal's courtyard mirrors the complexity and continuity of the scene, the setting, and the people as it goes on through its life cycle, flourishing and declining with season and weather, changing yet remaining unchanged, aging yet remaining ageless, as the life of Delhi, of India, and of man unfolds below.

This symbolic depth and technical excellence were recognized in 1940, and the novel's critical reception was almost unanimously good. Edwin Muir, Bonamy Dobree, and others recognized its merits in England, and Indian critics were no less reluctant to praise it. Nevertheless, it quickly went out of print and remained virtually unobtainable for almost twenty-five years. In the intervening years Ahmed Ali became Professor Ahmed Ali, opting for Pakistan at partition, where he served as Ambassador to Morocco and then to the Peoples Republic of China for more than a decade. Unfortunately these changes were detrimental to a sustained writing career, and he did not publish his second novel, *Oceans of Night*, until 1964.

Meanwhile, as the Delhi of the old order gave way to that of the British and then to the Republic of India, the novel based on its life became virtually a legend among young Pakistani writers. Its reissuing, first in Urdu translation in 1963 and then in a new English edition in 1966, made it again accessible to them. Its new edition also provoked another controversy, in many respects like that which marked its prepublication history in 1940. This time, however, the controversy did not concern possible subversion; it dealt with linguism, the problem of the multiplicity of competing languages in the subcontinent as well as the

cultural and political overtones of the continuing competition among them.

The language debate as it centers on *Twilight in Delhi* is, in many respects, an embryonic manifestation of the attempts to resolve the problem of linguism in Pakistan since partition and independence in 1947. The novel was written in English rather than in Urdu, the language of the Muslims of Delhi, many of whom, like Ahmed Ali himself, chose to go to Pakistan in 1947. This migration strengthened the role of Urdu as a major vernacular in that country, and shortly after partition many nationalistic critics began to insist that because it was written in English, *Twilight in Delhi* was of no consequence in the development of a Pakistani literary tradition. Not only did such a statement ignore the obvious influence of the novel, but by implication, it denigrated the role of Ahmed Ali himself in making that new literary direction possible, both through his contributions to the Urdu short story and to the cause of letters in general.

The debate became particularly barbed after the publication of the novel in Urdu translation as *Dilli ki Sham* in 1963. The translation, by Bilquis Jahan, Ahmed Ali's talented wife, is first rate, as he and numerous critics acknowledged at the time. Thus, the peculiar situation emerged in which a work appeared in the language indigenous to its background, customs, and idiomatic usages only after having been written in another tongue. Almost immediately the uniqueness of the situation became a factor in debating the language most appropriate to the work.

To one critic, Ibne Sa'ied, the Urdu version was clearly inferior to the English because it ". . . does not have the same poignancy, it seems to have lost the depth . . ." Particularly lacking to Ibne Sa'ied was the distortion in idiom that he insisted occurred in the translation:

> The language which was used to create an atmosphere of romance, mystery, illusion, the moral and spiritual fabric of the inherently Oriental characters of the story has been reduced to a compendium of idioms, slangs, colloquialisms, proverbiology and cliche-dom.

However, typical of the response by those who support the development of the national literatures in the vernaculars was the comment of "Acquarius," the reviewer of the *Morning News* of Karachi:

> The English language has never possessed a vocabulary or idiom in which a novel depicting the life of a particular milieu in the annals of the city of Delhi could be faithfully and correctly written . . .
>
> It is only the Urdu language which could have depicted the life of Delhi of a particular milieu more naturally and more faithfully in which *Twilight in Delhi* should have originally been written . . .

To both critics, literary judgments play a role in their diametrically opposed assessments of the language of the work and its translation as well

as in their opinions of the effectiveness of the work itself. But at the heart of their debate is the continuing controversy over the language suitable to the development of a nation that is now a generation old but still fragmented by the lack of a common linguistic background.

While such debates are necessary in finally resolving the language problem in Pakistan, they have no real bearing upon the ultimate literary value of any work, particularly one of the stature of *Twilight in Delhi*. The Urdu translation is not "an act of repatriation," as "Acquarius" insists, nor is the novel an English novel, as Ahmed Ali has commented in conversation. Such statements are only part of the truth, which is that the language of the novel is immaterial. *Twilight in Delhi* is first of all a first-rate novel, and as such it transcends language, as any substantial work of art ultimately must do. It is certainly in subject matter and in translation an Urdu novel, and in language and form much of it is English. But most of all, it is a novel about people, about life, and about time; it makes pertinent, often profound comments about them; and it makes them with grace and clarity. It effectively narrows the gap between two alien cultures, and it points the way toward a further narrowing in the future. In the process it has provided a model of technical skill for a generation of younger writers. Its proper language is the language of man, and wider dissemination rather than linguistic limitations should be its ultimate fate. Perhaps, as the Pakistani literary tradition becomes established and secure, the seminal role of *Twilight in Delhi* in developing that tradition will provide the foundation for the further study and dissemination that the novel deserves.

THREE POEMS

Zia Haider

After My Death

Translated from the Bengali by Abul H. Saaduddin and Thetis Simpson

No one wept at my death,
or sighed in the air of that room.
Instead that satisfied cynic, humble to genius,
relaxed in his chair, saying:
"Well, then one more bed is vacant now--
Yes, he was a nice guy. . ."
and he drew on the stem of his dying pipe.

Four pall-bearers came,
bound me carelessly like export goods.
They kept me under the scorching sun
as they were going towards the grave,
perhaps to change their shoulders,
perhaps with no thought at all.

A flock of crows came down instantly.
Trying to make friends with me
one said in a harsh cry:
"After your leaving someone remarked--
He was good;
always he wanted to share with everyone
an intimate, sincere affection and faith; but--
he stopped there, being frightened,
and looked at his surroundings,
then muttered only--
However, it's all over. . ."

Another crow whose feathers were white once,
perhaps the leader,
informed me in a voice ever harsher:
"Someone said
for that reason only
you've been distinguished
as pitiable and despisable to everyone,

and for this only no one remembered you,
except in downright necessity;
of course you're forgotten
when their interest is over.
So you desired once--
'Bury me in that place
where the fresh alluvial earth
will be overwhelmed with loving passion
being pregnant with the hope of green and
yellow spears,
whose innocent grain I am. . .'
They all forgot this."

"Therefore . . "
the leader-crow turned his head to the pall-bearers,
saying with a gesture of request:
"Therefore, you pall-bearers,
leave him in this dunghill.
To him who had no friend in his life,
at least for this moment we can be,
if . . ."

A Tale of a Lamp

Translated from the Bengali by Abul H. Saaduddin and George M. Murphy

The flickering wick of my lantern
has been quivering over the past few nights.
It may pass away at any moment!
I tried with frantic efforts to diagnose its ill,
but found it not

Someone assured me:
"Perhaps the wings of the wind
in a sportive mood
are playing with it."

With a booming loud whisper
said my humourous sister,
with a wink in her eyes:
"After many a summer
the wind has lost its way
in this spring."

But my younger brother, a medical freshman,
declared with his contemplative brow:
"Surely the lamp is suffering from a
coronary contraction."

I blew out the lantern,
and crept into my cozy bed.

In a secret attempt
I placed a hesitant hand on my chest
to feel something.

SEEN FROM FAR AWAY

Translated from the Bengali by Abul K. Saaduddin and Richard G. Mason

/ My Father /

Was it a needless impulse
that woke him this dawn,
before the sun cut the gleaming horizon;
or only a nightmare?

Eastward past the window his eyes stretch to the sky;
he listens to the murmers of falling leaves
onto the quiet pond;
songs of joyous morning birds
startle his pensive thought--
He is my Father,
whose life has seen no happiness,
but is drowned in regretful sorrows
and frustrated hopes.

Would he turn back and look at her
who sleeps with a serene countenance;
despite sincere endeavor
he couldn't offer the tender incense
to her life's altar;

yet ever-smilingly she shades him
with her cloak of love,
her long dark hair still brings the youthful spring
to his wearied soul in the languid twilight,
still she blesses him with her gentle touch of hands
before he sleeps at night--
She is a *Kalyani*.

Would he, lying on his life's thorny bed,
incant the sacred verse of *Sura Fateha*
in his silent soliloquy;
would his trembling lips utter:
"Surely it is a crime to hate Man;
this earth and the mundane life
with all their anguish and etceteras
they are beautiful.
So my dear child, embrace Life,
for it is life alone that can enrich life--
love mankind with all its virtues and vices,
and do not conceal Truth,
or you'll be guilty to your conscience."

Perhaps when prayer is over
he'll saunter to the grove which he knows so long,
leaning on his trusted stick of solitary moments;
and express his intimate feelings, whispering:
"Forgive my exhausted soul, O Lord!"
or he'll sing:
"Swing not the tender flowery creepers of the orchard,
O nightingale."

Would he look back to the picturesque panorama
of his bygone days,
and stare at the streaming chronicle of his life,
full of rapids and shoals--

O my dearest father,
do you still dream of the ocean,
in whose image you see
the unkind embrace of death and blessed life?
Does the flaming light of your tired eyes,
O my father,
still flicker in yearning for the radiant sun?

/ My Mother /

In this sleepless hour
when the night is dark like the sorrows of her life,
she, lighting that small earthen lamp,
is perhaps lost in the verses of the Holy Koran--
My Mother!

Once she stops her prayer
and slowly comes to my deserted bed
in deep silence,
and fondles the forlorn pillow
sleeping like the darling child.

Suddenly she rises, lest someone see,
abashed a little, she wears a smile--
the soft light of ever-goodness--
comes back to her sacred mat,
and reads her faith again;
her prayers to the Merciful
awake the tranquilled river of the night.

Sudden unmindful tears from fear unknown
will dim the brightness of her eyes;
yet with unfaltering faith and peaceful resignation
she'll raise her gentle hands,
and utter the resonant silent prayers
for a flower, spears of grain and dove.

Abdullah Husain

THE BROOK*

Translated from Urdu
by Muhammad Umar Memon

I have just received Byron's letter, and I remember something which happened two years ago and which I had nearly forgotten. Inexorably, time so overwhelms our memory and renders our hearts so completely helpless that nothing is recollected, no matter how hard one tries. Destinations pass by, as the caravan of life hurtles toward oblivion. It is the kindness of our memory which corrodes past impressions, thus enabling us to outlive the past; for who could have marched ahead with the memorial paraphernalia of all times, or dared to participate in the pitch-dark future with one's cumbrous memories?

It is a very peaceful and transparent afternoon in the fall. I am sitting on the bridge across the stream in front of my house. I can see the table in my veranda, on which lies open a neat pile of letters received in the morning mail, excepting one which I have stuffed in my shirt pocket after carefully folding it. Every now and then I reach with my hand to feel the faint rustle of the expensive paper. I wish to read it once again. But I cannot; because there is such subtle peace in the pale autumn sun, in the gently flowing waters, in the pale trees dropping their dry, yellow leaves far and wide in the running brook, in the air caught up in the trees, and in the ploughing motion of the farmer working in the yellow field below -- a silent and tranquil spell which is always found in autumn and especially in the afternoon. A silence so deadly still and invulnerable to disturbance. I scarcely remember now who had remarked that the saddest and probably the most touching spectacle in the world is a farmer tilling his land. He was an artist, maybe.

Once again I feel for the letter. Right under my chin, as though in a golden rush of reminiscence, I can see far-off scenes -- lost but dear faces of yesteryears -- gently flow by downstream. The tyranny of time is subsiding. Brook! my dear friend, lend me your ear.

---

*_The Brook_ is but a poor substitute for the original _Naddi_, which is neither a river nor a brook, for both conjure up a resounding rhythm, while what Mr Husain has in mind can be best characterized by a flow, both gentle and slow-moving. This is essential for the whole atmosphere of the story. In Urdu, this rhythm is adequately conveyed by _Naddi_. ---(Translator.)

It was my second day at a small west Canadian university that stood peacefully on a silent hill. It had been raining that day, until around noon it slackened, thinned to a faint drizzle, and finally stopped. Thick clouds split asunder. It was a fairly tiring day. Bored to death, I sauntered out of my room. Cars stood parked here and there on wide, asphalted roads, washed clean after heavy rains, with wet, crimson, yellowing maple leaves scattered on their tops. Some boys stood leaning over the engine of a small car. As I came nearer, they raised their heads and said hello to me in their friendly way. A few yards ahead was the girls' dorm, and as I walked past it I was scanned critically by a whole lot of them standing on the steps. Further up the street was the university chapel, and a young priest smiled and greeted me with warmth as he came outside. In the rear was old Jim, waiter of the refectory, carrying an empty milk bottle in his hand. On coming nearer, he greeted me, his pipe still stuffed in his mouth, and we walked on our separate ways. Because I was a newcomer, he was my only acquaintance except the Dean, I thought, and I shivered. The cold became too severe all of a sudden. Drops of rain, caught in the leaves, trickled down from maple and pine trees as the wind stirred among them. I raised my collar, suddenly feeling chilly, and made my way to the common room which stayed open till late.

The hall was empty. Windows had been slammed shut. Inside it was comfortably warm, a haven from the rain which had meanwhile started falling again. I kept trudging aimlessly on the fleecy, green carpet, occasionally glancing at the books. A variety of periodicals and newspapers lay scattered on the tables. A stale smell exuded from the books and furniture and hung arrested inside the hall. With my hands still jammed in my pockets, I glanced over the front covers of some periodicals and even thought of settling down at a table to read a newspaper, but the next moment, heartily enjoying the clumsiness of my thought, I moved over to a big window instead. I watched the small drops of rain make a dull sound as they beat in vain against the hard glass panels. Outside, red and grey, mauve and crimson maple leaves kept falling. They whirled and danced and floated in puddles of water. The red top of the chapel stood out against the sky. Behind it dark mountains stretched out to infinity. Beyond them, I thought, somewhere was my country, many thousand miles sway. And there were oceans between us.

"It is such a pleasure, watching rainfall from behind closed shutters," someone said behind me.

Gradually, very slowly, I backed out of my thoughts and held myself still for a few seconds before I turned around. It was a girl who stood leaning over a magazine, her back turned to me. She appeared to have uttered these words to the magazine before her. She had on a scarlet woolen sweater, and a pair of spectacles rested clumsily on the bridge of her small nose.

"I feel," she began, still leaning, then turned around and looked straight into me, "I feel as if some wayfarer has suddenly come this way, knocking timidly at our doors."

"Ugh?" I managed with difficulty. I was a trifle nervous. Her eyes and hair had the color of bright champagne.

"I always feel that way. You too, don't you?"

"Me?" I said, still quite nervous.

"Where do you come from?" she inquired.

"I -- "

"Hold on," she cut in, "let me guess. Spain, that's where you come from!"

"No. Not quite."

"Not from Spain?" she said with a trace of suffering. "Your kind of people always come from Spain. Miro, too, came from Spain, some two years ago. We were good friends, you know?"

"Then?"

"He is gone. Tell me, where do you come from?"

"Guess."

"Oh no, please. I just wanted to know whether you didn't come from Spain. Tell me?"

I told her the name of my country.

"Well, I am Blanca," she introduced herself and resumed: "I am a great linguist," she said good naturedly as her even, white teeth opened up in a melodic smile. "I mean I'm only a student. A student of linguistics. Well, señior, how about you?"

I told her my name and that I had come there to do research in physics.

"Gosh, you mean you are a research scholar?" she raised her brows. "Strange, by your looks you appear to be a junior in geography to me." She giggled as she went on in her complacent way. "Physics is an interesting subject, too, but not quite as interesting as linguistics. Well, let's take this magazine. Now, can you read it? I'm pretty sure you can't. Or would you rather try?"

I came nearer and tried strenuously for a moment to make out the words in a foreign language.

"Give up," she laughed at my helplessness. "You can never ever read it. No. It is Russian." Her face lit up with elation as she said: "I'm studying Russian, also Spanish and Latin. Spanish is my major, though. I always spoke Spanish while I was with Miro."

"And with whom do you speak Russian now?"

"Now? Only with my professor. A very difficult language it is, but very fascinating. Just now I was reading Petrovosky's story. Next year I plan to go to Russia. I have to do some research there. How much I want to go there! Moscow ---marvellous, fabulous Moscow! You know, there is such a mystery in that city of tzars and Rasputin and Tolstoy and Dostoyevski and Mayakovsky and Nijinski and Pasternak. It has a character of its own, too distinctly its own: strange and dignified and fascinating, just as there is a character of Vienna and Paris. You just think of them and mysteries stir up in the memory. New York is only a few hundred miles from here. But I never think of going there. I might be impressed by its huge expanse if I go there. But it has no attraction for me. Perhaps, I shall never go there. I want to see Russia. Don't you also want to go there?"

"To be candid enough," I said, "if I could, I would only want to go back where I come from."

"Oh," she went on as she put her glasses on the table. "You people from the East are all very emotional."

"I come from Southeast Asia." I told her, rather proudly.

"Well, for that matter, the Spanish aren't any different."

"You love Spain, don't you? I see you have a feeling for this word."

"No, not quite. Let's not talk any more of Spain." She sobered up and became sad once again. "But I had a wonderful friendship with Miro. A strange fellowship as one would call it."

"Fellowship?"

"Whom have you met here on the campus?" She deliberately digressed.

I told her I didn't know anybody except for the Dean of the Faculty of Science, who had invited me for supper that evening, and old Jim.

"I see," she said. "It's so fortunate that you've run into me here this evening. I'm a fairly useful person, you know." She was talking once again lightheartedly. "Too unpopular in a certain group on the campus and extremely popular in another. Anyway, you'll see for yourself that I'm famous like a devil. The whole faculty despises me. You know why? Because I've more intelligence than they can probably handle. This you must have noticed yourself by now. Well, you'll be really pleased to meet me. I've a colorful personality, friend." She adjusted her glasses, looked at me amusingly and broke into laughter.

I joined her, still a bit nervous. By the time we stopped, we had become good friends, painful foreignness had disappeared. I removed my jacket and hung it on the peg and came to sit beside her. She told me a lot about the university: its past history, its scandals, term engagements, so on and so forth. I reciprocated by giving an account of my country; even told her some very intimate bits of my life as a student. She listened with enthusiasm.

Outside, it was still raining and chilly, but the room was comfortably warm due to central heating. Listening and talking and being so close to her, I felt myself strangely relaxed and resigned. She told me of some of her very close friends in her usual, slightly ironical way, and spoke of their petty troubles and comforts and all that was so amusing in what they did. As she talked, she would suddenly grow sad and forlorn, and her voice would seem to come from afar; next moment she would give out a hearty laugh. In less than an hour I saw her eyes and face change into umpteen different shades. When it got fairly dark outside, and the rain had finally stopped, she shrugged her shoulders and stood up.

"Well, let's get going now. Pretty late. None will show up that late."

While putting on my jacket, I nearly forgot it was my second day here and I was still a stranger.

"Poor Petrovosky's story," she said as she closed the Russian periodical. Then she began hurriedly arranging the scattered periodicals and newspapers, and told me: since the monitor of the common room hadn't turned up yet, the Dean had her and three other girls work, each for one day. "Today, it was my turn," she said. "So downright wicked of them. No one showed up. You know, all day I've been messing them up myself so as to give the impression a crowd of readers has just left."

"You are pretty wicked," I said. She blushed and chuckled like a kid.

As the key turned slowly, she told me, rather secretively: "You don't know, this Dean Jenkins is a pretty mean fellow." She stopped for a small moment on the steps of the corridor, knotted her scraf carefully, felt the faint drizzle on her face and gave a brief but deep, emotional laugh before she said:

"How stupid. I haven't said a thing about the weather. Well, you may have noticed, this place is surrounded by hills where it rains frequently. With the first showers of autumn, the weather suddenly turns chilly. The tall and brooding maples then drop off their remaining leaves, and one is overwhlemed by a desire to soar high up in the atmosphere, just like this," she spread her arms and fluttered them like a bird. "Like this. If only I had wings! I would have flown to that high branch, from where the leaves have just fallen." Her arms were still poised for fluttering. Then she slowly raised her face with her eyes closed in ecstasy. After a while she opened them. Solitary she stood, feline and glaring, a strange, liquid light pouring out of her wise bright eyes.

In the faint, mellow radiance of the evening, her skin sent forth waves upon waves of perfume and also a kind of soft, almost caressing, light. Her beautiful forehead glowed with happiness; her teeth were like white diamonds; and a rebellious lock of hair arrogantly stuck out from under her scraf, almost touching my chin.

"You are so beautiful," a moment later I found myself saying, "so incredibly beautiful!"

"Really?" she asked. Her uplifted hands gently falling to her sides as she looked up at me, her eyes slightly dilated with a lost, blue look in them.

I was stunned. Having found no answer, she turned round to me and said:

"Kiss me."

My eyes began to blink in sheer embarrassment.

"Kiss," she almost demanded, harshly.

Astonishment froze me rigid. I leaned over her face and gently kissed her on the forehead.

"Is that all?" she released a long breath and asked peacefully.

"No, not all," I protested feebly.

"I can understand," she began with unction, "men go about knocking the whole world, longing for friendship and company. Yet a desire is left in their heart of hearts and that is to subjugate woman. Men lack imagination so incredibly much that even after talking about a whole lot of things all their tall talk culminates in sex. 'You're cute!' and all is up with her. After that, misunderstanding creeps in her heart, she loses her defenses and consents to incarceration. She could now be a beloved, could give and bear pain, everything and anything, but couldn't hope to be a friend. As for myself, I am sorry Sultan Husain, I can only make friends. That's all there is to it. Now Sultan Husain, I guess all your problems stand solved, and you ought to be thankful to me for that. We are now equals and let's not pretend, neither you nor I. You are free. You may kiss me wherever and whenever you like and yet be free, understand?"

I stood biting my lips, feeling both slighted and annoyed. She looked dejected all at once.

"Just because of these silly things, I have become unpopular among a majority of boys. But those who are my real friends, I mean -- Well, now," she paused, "it's up to you to pick up whichever group you wish. Let's go." She clutched my hand and began climbing down the stairs, almost running.

Soaking wet in the dark drizzle and jumping over the scattered small pools of water, she was now once again talking in her low-pitched, ironical way.

"Come to think of it," she began, "I haven't told you a thing about my personal attainments. Well, in my freshman year, I produced an exhaustive dissertation on Dante's Beatrice. It brought me fair recognition. It was awarded the prize for the best article of the year. Later, the university press printed it in book form. Miro was so taken in by the stuff that he rendered it in Spanish and sent it for publication to a Madrid publisher.

That fellow turned out a perfect rogue and swallowed it clean. It is a remarkable piece, anyway. I am going to give it to you to read. It will help you grow a great deal mentally." She laughed. "I see you are going to eat with the Dean this evening. Well, you should have some tips I have up my sleeve. I bet you'll profit immensely. Now, this Dean Richards is a pretty nasty fellow, hates me and despises me beyond all measures; and stingy as he is, he would never ask anyone for dinner. Since you are the first Asian, pardon me, Southeast Asian, student to have come here, I guess he has made an exception in your case. Now the tips: Well, remember you don't forget paying court to the lousiest cur in the world. I mean his dog. You'll see a sluggish beastly thing all huddled up on his doorsteps. This is a St. Bernard, his precious pet. Don't ever be scared of him. He is such a dull, lazy, useless creature as one ever saw. You must praise him anyway. And see you never get tired of interesting yourself in bird-watching. This is his hobby. If you did, he'll surely feel bad and as you know this can harm you a great deal. You should remember all that."

"Did you say he hates you?" I asked.

"Oh yes. Well," she began, "it's a pretty long story. Anyway, last winter at the close of the Christmas Ball, around eleven in the evening, as we were getting out of Jackson Hall, the boys begged us girls to join them in their dorm. So we sneaked in and began dancing with them in the lounge. They had a great big nude on the wall. Now, you know, we are not permitted in the boys' dorm. Around one a.m. someone told on us to Dean Richards. He came, shouting and swearing all the way, but somehow we got wind of it just in time. So, some of us hid behind the sofas and those left outside began carolling so that when he came we plainly told him that we were just passing by. Well, we came out singing carols at the top of our voices. Inside he happened to see the great big nude. That really did it. He got red all over, screaming with anger, and took the nude away. We flooded inside again. For a while we sat smoking on the tables, almost bored to death. Then someone thought we had better draw a cartoon of Richards. I was unanimously picked out for the job. We hung it in place of the nude and returned. But the real trouble began the following morning when some ignorant thief informed him that we were still there after he had left and that Blanca Williams did a cartoon of him which she hung on the wall. He came to see it himself, boiling all over. He has been sore at me since. But I don't give a damn, of course, and Dean Jenkins knows this pretty well. If you want to save your skin, don't tell him you have met me this evening."

"Look there, it is our chapel. One of these days I shall take you to see it from inside. And there, that is the refectory where three times a day we gulp down poison. Byron is expected to be here shortly. Make friends with him. He is such a nice fellow, a divine darling! Well now, pal, this is my place, what do you say? We shall meet again all right. So long, then."

Three days had passed since the term began. All day I had been wandering with my professor from one lab to another. In the evening I returned feeling nearly exhausted. I changed and walked out for dinner so that on my return there could still be time to get off some letters

to the family, Laila in particular. As I left home, she had looked up at me with her little face trembling.

"Bhai Jan!" she had said, "please do write us all about the good places you see and the nice people you meet, will you?"

At ten that evening, as I was getting ready to go to sleep, it began: a wild ruckus, with shrill female voices dominating. I rushed down the stairs and outside. Boys stood expectantly on both sides of the walk, while from afar there came a procession, lighting its way by flashlights. As it got nearer, I saw the wildest spectacle: some hundred and fifty or more girls, all in their pajamas, yelling and milling in great panic like a herd of sheep. They ran and stumbled and halted, now grabbing their collars, now arranging their hair, now shrinking, now shivering, now screaming, now laughing with shame. The senior girls had formed an impenetrable ring around them and pushed them forward with the flashlights. The gang of boys stood laughing on the sidewalks. In the glare of a flashlight I was almost surprised to see Blanca.

"This is what we call the Pajama Procession of the frosh," Byron, my friend of four days came over to tell me. "An age-old tradition here at the campus. Bossed over by the senior girls, these freshman girls follow them like timid sheep for a couple of days; but then, they soon begin to believe in the total goodness of the world, and that's when they are stirred out of their beds one night by a false cry of 'Fire! Fire!' Still in their night-robes, they are then serenaded all around the campus. Some are so shocked they don't show up in the class for days. As a rule, only sophomore girls can partake of this little mischief, but Blanca joins in invariably every year. Professors don't approve of that, but then she couldn't care less. She even drags Jane along. Look, there," he pointed, "there's Jane, right behind Blanca. Jane is studying library science. We are getting married as soon as we finish here."

We kept talking by the sidewalk for a long while after the procession had passed. A big moon had meanwhile slowly risen. It was a cool, impeccably clean, muslin-crisp fall night. Maple leaves kept gently falling on us. Four days ago I had met Byron, a graduate student in economics, and one of Blanca's closest friends. He was fairly cultured, handsome, and a sound young man of Irish parentage. His family had now permanently settled in Canada. He still retained some blurred memories of Dublin and talked about it with a sweet but painful nostalgia, just as we all do while suddenly reminded of all the beautiful, dreamy places we had been to, or lived in, in childhood.

That night, talking with him by the sidewalk, I brimmed over in my heart with an all too strong vigor and freshness of early youth, quite oblivious that all that is good in human life: youth, beauty and loveliness---like forgotten old fairy tales---stays behind us, lying inert underneath the debris of our shattered dreams, in faces that were so loving once, in the time that is past, and in the greying leaves fallen in yesteryears, and in that which, sometimes later, while one is leaning over and looking and constantly looking at the cool running waters, crops up suddenly on the surface to submerge all too soon.

After the pajama procession we returned to our rooms, and the following days were busy. However, in mid-month it was time for the autumn dance, and Byron said to me, "Why don't you ask Blanca for a date?"

"Ask Blanca for a date? Heavens, I'm not sure she would come. Besides, I don't know any dancing."

"So far as I know," said Byron, "she isn't going out with anyone these days. It won't hurt to ask, anyway."

So I phoned her. She excused herself, saying she had already been asked by another boy and had promised him, and that she would have certainly enjoyed going with me, but then, she didn't know if I would ask her, so on and so forth.

"Never mind," said Byron, "I'll find you a date."

But before evening, Blanca phoned me. "Well, Sultan of Southeast Asia!" she began humorously, "I have selected a girl for you. A queen in her own right. Now listen, I don't want to hear 'No,' do you understand? A cute little freshman thing. Pick her up at her dorm tomorrow evening. She'll be waiting for you near the stairs. She has long, dark hair. Introduce yourself. Her name is Isabella."

Fall is exquisitely beautiful in West Canadian woods where it glows with a thousand different colors. Before they fall, the leaves change into yellow, red, golden-brown, champagne, black, almost all colors. On the evening of the autumn ball, all these colors blazed in paper buntings that fluttered in Jackson Hall. On the dance floor, Isabella had me try out a few steps. Then we sat down, feeling nearly exhausted, and began chatting lightheartedly. She had curly hair, entwined and black, chestnut brown eyes, a face nearly covered with pimples, and a simple body. Had she a trifle bit more charm she would have certainly looked attractive, but she was a serious and sincere girl who knew barely anything outside her subject which was English literature, obviously not my interest, so that it was almost impossible to keep talking. Soon we got tired and, our drinks still in our hands, we quietly walked down to a corner table and, stuck as we were with genuine boredom, began watching the couples who shouted and danced and sang all at once. Once or twice Byron and Jane danced past us. None of the boys had come to ask Isabella for a dance but she was quite complacent, for she was among those freshman girls who had come there with a date. The autumn ball, in a way, served also as an occasion for formal introduction for the freshmen. Most of the freshman girls had therefore come alone, waiting to be picked up by the boys as they stood all along the wall in twos and fours. In the same way, the freshman boys sat in small groups and stared at the girls. They would stand up all at once whenever the orchestra ran wild, playing a boisterous tune. They would surge forward *en masse*, like a lurching wave, on the strength of their collective support, mumbling inaudibly, with their cheeks suddenly crimson, and began dancing with whatever girl came in front of them. On the whole, I was quite amused by the spectacle. Most of the couples had been formed in little less than an hour and were now laughing in the fervor of newly acquired friendships. I was on the point of making a final effort to work up a conversation with Isabella when somebody tapped on my shoulder.

"May I have the pleasure of dancing with you?" It was Blanca, asking in her characteristic half-serious, half-jocular way. I looked up at her with a start. Her hair had a dazzling brilliance and was dyed golden. For a few moments I kept blinking my eyes nervously, then excused myself to Isabella. We walked out on the waxed parquet floor.

"Don't stare at me so hard as though you were an uncouth country boy," she admonished me. "Hair dyeing is my hobby."

"Really?"

"Why yes! If only there was a way of coloring one's eyes, I would have gladly colored mine."

"But it looked still lovelier in its original color."

"Oh, I could never imagine myself committing such blunders. Forgive me. Next time I shall be more careful. I shall ask written permission of you well in advance, all right?"

"I didn't mean that," I said, hurt.

"What else did you mean then?" she asked both with certainty and smugness. "I see you dance pretty well."

"Just now Isabella taught me."

"Isabella?" She paused. "Well, how about Isabella? You haven't said a thing. You like her, don't you?"

"Yes, very much."

"She is cute, isn't she?"

"Yes, very cute indeed."

"And intelligent, too."

"And intelligent, too. Very intelligent," I said rather curtly.

She looked up straight into my eyes, then almost dragged me into the corridor.

"What the hell is the matter? Why so cynical?" she asked in the semi-dark corridor. "Are you angry?"

"No."

"Now come on."

"But there is nothing."

"Want to kiss me, then?"

"No "

"Isabella?"

"No, please -- " I said angrily.

"Why?"

"Why? We don't kiss our girl friends, that's all."

She was dolorous again. "That explains it," she said.

"Expains what?"

"That you are sentimental," she said painfully. "Miro was sentimental, too. You people simply create complications. I am so scared of them, all these sentimental people."

"You know why?" I started, my eyes boring levelly into hers. "It is because you are yourself sentimental."

She gave me a withering look and, upset as she was, staggered a bit but soon got into stride. In the hall, life sputtered vigorously: the ball was in full swing and a crescendo of laughter, spirited conversation and dragging steps, together with strong light, came drifting through high windows. She was standing along the railing, blinking her eyes swiftly. Within minutes the unnatural lustre of her eyes and the smiling ridicule with which she poked fun at the world and entire humanity came back to her, only to make me still crazier. Suddenly she reached up, girdled her hands around my neck, forced my head down, kissed me on the lips and ran back inside.

I returned feeling sulky. Isabella had disappeared meanwhile. I didn't bother to look for her. That evening I was forced to recognize the fact of Blanca's tremendous popularity among the boys. A good dozen times I tried to dance with her but couldn't reach her in the first place, and even if I did, I was each time obliged to step back, unwillingly giving her hands into those of some intruder who had just tapped my shoulder. Isabella danced with a certain boy all along. Once as they came dancing near me, she stopped for a moment to introduce her partner: a freshman of short stature and rather big ears, who smiled at me amiably from behind his thick glasses. Seeing them together and so close, I was assailed by a strange happiness.

The last loud bars of the dance quickened sharply and hundreds of tired feet dragged and lost their rhythm. Then the last dance began, a slow, majestic waltz, intricate but subdued and romantic. I was surprized by the presence of a meaningless dismay, an inarticulate anger that zigzagged through me at intervals. It made me terribly nervous and I tried to suppress it but minutes later forgot all about it. Her eyes, forever shining with derision, immense popularity, ubiquitous disposition of her nature --- all of these were imbued with a profound mystery which was so utterly maddening. And that silent scorn in the curve of her smiling lips which seemed to proclaim to everyone: I know you. You are just insignificant. Where would you hide yourself from me? I am everywhere.

Coats were put on amidst a chorus of good-nights. Outside, the night was pleasantly cool and desolate. Car doors were being opened and closed.

Tired eyelids now dropped, now opened. I came out, my hands on Isabella's shoulder, and found Blanca standing with her group on the pavement.

"Hi, Blanca, good-night." I made it as casual as I could, trying to steer my way clear of her, but she gently put her hand on my arm and said:

"You'd better not attach yourself to people, Sultan Husain." Then a split second later came her voice, as if from afar: "Else you'll get mixed up in this worthless maze. Freedom is the essence; the rest? -- phony!"

"Really?" I threw a glance at her as I said vacantly.

And then the parting laughters of the evening and good-night kisses; kisses -- which drop down one by one like greying maple leaves, and laughters -- which will freeze up rigid in the darkness of night, and crop up later in the bylanes of memory to keep us warm and young and alive for many, many years to come, not to be seen anywhere, becoming a part of running waters, fused with them in eternal embrace.

"Good-night, Sultan."

"Good-night, Blanca. Good-night, Isabella."

"Good-night. Thank you very much."

"And thank you, too."

"Good-night. Good-night. Good-night."

In the following weeks, I became completely absorbed in my studies. A couple of times I called on Blanca but she wasn't available. She was always too busy. On holidays Byron and I usually went out for long walks in the neighboring mountain woods. The woods are always serene and colorful. It was during one of those afternoon walks that I discovered Byron was something of a philosopher besides being a graduate student in economics, and that he was in constant pursuit of, if not yet able to discover, himself.

"Blanca is much too abnormal." I remember him telling me one afternoon while we strolled in the woods. "She paints herself so remarkably well that you can hardly claim to understand her. And this is her art. Whatever she says and does is just the opposite of what she believes. I once had a crush on her too. But you know, she never permits that. 'Byron,' she plainly told me, 'we can be such good friends together if only you just stopped being crazy. You know, you are so dear to me.' Well, I sobered up. Now, she is my best friend. It is useless to try to grasp her; even when you're close to her, you can't do it.

Those silent woods, those idyllic sunny afternoons, and that unshakeable feeling of association, which rose slowly and became stronger every moment, stand as milestones on the path of my life.

Then Byron suddenly disappeared. One Sunday, Blanca phoned me. "Sultan," she said, "Byron had it again, I mean his art-fit, and is hiding with one of his friends downtown these days. Even I don't know where. Guess this time he will perhaps discover himself. Ah, poor David Fitzgerald Byron!"

I invited her for an afternoon walk. She hesitated a little then gave in. The woods were as usual mysteriously silent and the sun gently spread its gold on the paths covered with dead leaves. Blanca talked and talked about her engagements in the past few days. She was laconic as always, and so was her tone which was both light and ironically sad.

"I'm pretty sure," she said, "sooner or latter Byron will find himself. Only and only then he would produce something of credit."

"You folks, why do you insist on being so mysterious?" I asked irritatedly.

"Mystery," she laughed with irony, "my dear friend, is pretty important. We are all mean, weak, and each one of us carries so much dishonesty inside that we need it to hide behind, never to lose our appeal, in short, to keep going; do you understand? Let's step into that young forest, this old one scares me out of my wits."

We got out of the aged woods and entered one which had fresh, young trees. The layer of young decaying leaves that covered the paths was thin and cold. Trees had been stripped naked in the bracing cold of late fall and the sun shone all over. Blanca clambered up a hill and then dropped to the ground feeling tired.

"In a few days, it'll start snowing and all the spell will be gone. All places will freeze into a single, monotonous white block. The spell of autumn is so short-lived! And all other spells, for that matter. Did you look for me?"

"I did. Three times in the past two weeks."

"Why?"

"Nothing, just wanted to see you."

"See me," she repeated unmindfully.

"You were busy. You are always busy."

Feeling the depth of my voice and its concern, she looked at me in alarm. Then she gently put her hand on my arm and said: "Hold on." She paused, "I do believe you've fallen in love with me, haven't you?"

"Me? Falling in love with you? Ridiculous!" I was pretty obstinate. "I can hardly afford such nonsense."

"It's all right, then," she laughed. "If that's that, well, we can always be good friends. All these folks, heavens, why is it that the only thing they know is to love me?"

"I never thought you had illusions about yourself."

"Illusions?" she paused. "They are not illusions, Mr. Sultan Husain, but hard reality," she laughed. "All of them, without exception. And you know, why? Because I'm so different from other girls they keep knocking against every day. This isn't their fault, I guess, but then, not mine, either. Shall I tell you just one more thing? However much you may excite me, I shall never fly off the handle. Instead of calling me an illusionist, you could just as well have said I was lying; even that would have been all right. I've heard much dirtier things said about myself than that. Still, don't you see, I've a friendship with the whole world, haven't I?"

"Maybe. I don't know." I was sullen.

"Well, now, look here, if you can't tolerate me then let's quit." She stood up.

"Oh, no, please," I said nervously. "Stay on. I didn't mean that. I was thinking of something else."

She laughed and kept talking in her cruel, mean and utterly inexplicable way.

Later, a number of times we ambled along together in the woods. Once in a while Jane and Byron joined us and after the walk all four of us went to The Dragon, our favorite downtown restaurant, and had ice cream and coffee and even ate there sometimes if one of us had enough dough on him to outwit the Samaritan. Byron had changed a bit; he had grown whiskers and music had become his latest passion. Consequently he neglected his studies, thus making Jane quite apprehensive about his mental and spiritual condition. We always consoled her. She was such a pretty little thing to be hurt. At times Byron's indifference to himself and to Jane so outraged me that I nearly thought of beating him up right in the street. It was snowing again, but we went out regularly.

In those days I was quite involuntarily driven toward making sense out of and seeking a hidden meaning behind all that Blanca said or did, watching closely all her gestures and all the shades of her mercurial nature, so that I could help myself straighten out the mess in which her enigmatic personality had thrown me so irrevocably. I didn't know then that all this while I had been falling in love with her, slowly but surely.

A dance was scheduled for the evening before the start of Christmas vacation. I asked Blanca for a date, but she declined in a roundabout way.

"With whom you are going out, then?" I insisted.

She thought for a moment before she answered: "Michael."

"Congratulations, then," I said and left.

In the evening she phoned me. "You are angry, aren't you, Sultan? I am really sorry to have turned down your request once again. But you see, Michael is a very sensitive boy and if I didn't go with him he would feel terribly hurt. And how I hate to hurt people. Listen, I had a long distance talk with mother. How about spending Christmas with us? Won't you? Guess you aren't going elsewhere?"

"You are sure," I began, still feeling hurt, "your folks won't mind?"

"Mind? Heavens, no. Don't be crazy. Mother has invited you in particular. Listen, we'll get the train tomorrow evening, shall we?"

I accepted gladly, though inside I was pretty jealous at the thought of her going out with Michael.

"So you'll pick me up at the dorm tomorrow about six in the evening." Toward the close of the Christmas ball she reminded me. "Now, don't you go to bed all soused up, else we will miss the train. The rest I'll tell on board."

The hectic evening paled away in the shouts of "Merry Christmas." Outside it snowed heavily.

The following morning, while I was busy packing, Byron dashed in to tell me that he had just heard the news of Blanca's sudden departure by an early morning train. Stunned as I was, I kept staring vacantly at the wall for a while. Next I grabbed the phone. Her dorm confirmed the news.

"Any message?" I nearly shouted.

"No. Not for you, Sultan," Jan spoke at the other end. "Did you expect one?"

I hung up on her rudely, mad with rage. But what could be done now? Except of course unpacking the bag, I thought, and accordingly I unpacked.

In the afternoon Byron again peeped into my room. He appeared to be quite shocked. "What? What is this mess all about?"

"Yes," I exploded, "the dressing table was bare, so I covered it with my pajamas, and my shoes looked pretty dirty, so I gave them a treat, a real treat, with paste and brush, so what? The table-lamp was in acute need of a shine, obviously. But what the hell am I telling you all this for. Listen, buddy, this is my room. Now get lost, will you?"

He scurried out, looking suspiciously at me. I pushed up the window and smashed the small snowball I had been nurturing with care and love for the past three days. Fragile needles of frozen snow went crisscrossing in every direction. It was still snowing. The whole world looked white. "Merry Christmas!" Outside, pine and cypress trees stood, gently bent with loads of snow. "Merry White Christmas! Merry Christmas, get lost! Get the hell out of here!" Having thus ousted Christmas, I pulled down the window. Small, arrogant snowflakes kept breaking against it silently.

Next day I received a letter from Blanca, a brief one. She said she was fully conscious of her rudeness but she just couldn't help it, and of course there were reasons for it which it would be in my interest not to know. To these she had only slightly alluded; she mentioned that she had a brawl with her mother. I tore up the letter and flung the bits out of my window.

Christmas, of course, I spent with my professor. After that I felt pretty depressed for a few days. It was then in my most blue and bleak days that the reality of my having fallen in love with her dawned on me. It made me feel more than ever dejected. I remained genuinely surprised over that for quite some days.

The day classes resumed I ran into her as she was coming out of the library. On my part I had resolved never to talk again with her. After all she had let me down so terribly. But she met with such equanimity and composure as if there hadn't happened a thing between us.

"Oh, hi, Sultan," she began equably with an informality and an unshakeable confidence that were so characteristically her own. "How have you been these days? I missed you so terribly much; in fact, I missed all my friends. Gee, you look so pink and fresh. Snow seems to suit you quite well."

"Heavens, it's snowing so heavily." I could think of nothing else to say.

"How about eating supper at the Dragon this evening? I'm pretty rich these days, so don't worry about money. There is so much to talk about. After all, we haven't seen each other for ages. Is that all right?"

Before she could regret her offer, I accepted promptly. Both my resolve and my indignation were swept away by a flood of good feeling. She looked so dashingly smart in her duffel coat and hazy red scarf. Her nearness made me smile. It always happened like that, with her at least; you thought you could continue in your indifference and then you saw her and then all your resolve vanished. And it was also true of the boys who would denounce her and then gather around her timidly when she happened to be around.

That evening, I found myself sitting opposite her in our favorite place. The strange, light mood in which I had been in the morning had given way to a dull irritation over the depression of all those days since she flew away from me. For almost half an hour neither of us said a word. We were now waiting for the coffee to be served.

"Did you receive my letter?" She finally broke the ice.

"Yes."

"Still angry?"

"No. Not angry. Did you have a pleasant Christmas?"

"Oh yes, a very nice one. We had lots of fun."

Her smug and friendly tone made me sufficiently uneasy.

"I don't quite see why your mother had to pick on Christmas to have a fight with you?"

"Sultan," she at once sobered up, "you think I told you a lie?"

"Even if you did, it didn't help."

"Nasty," she cried, almost in pain, and having found my eyes blinking apprehensively, squandered one of her most disparaging giggles. "Is that all, then? Was that the last thing in your armory? You people run out of amunition so soon. I was at fault, don't I know that? But you could have just as well forgiven me."

"Blanca --," but I was cut short.

"And this is always the case when you attach yourself too much to others."

"Now listen, Blanca. Listen," I leaned slightly forward and, levelling with her, nearly shouted. "You don't understand, you don't --"

"Sssh, not so loud," she warned me by placing her finger on her lips as she got up. People around us seemed quite amused by this little scene. At the cash register she tossed a few bills but I pushed her rudely aside and paid instead.

Outside, it was slightly uncomfortable after the cozy warmth of the restaurant. Gusts of cold wind kept tugging at our clothes and hitting against our faces. Fair wisps of glacial brilliance began gathering on our eyelashes. We walked and walked, wading silently through the snowclad street, our faces all wrapped in mufflers. This quarter of the city, where we walked now, was unknown to me and I didn't have the vaguest idea where she was headed.

"Where are you taking me, Blanca?" I asked.

"Be quiet, just come along," she said and took a handful of snow from a small cypress and stuffed it in her mouth.

At last she steered me into a rather small street and stopped at a certain door. She pressed the call bell, and after a while pressed it again. The door was answered by a girl who, seeing Blanca, gave out a shrill cry and embraced her wildly. She then stepped back and quickly came to me.

"I'm Anna," the girl thrust forward her hand very informally, then she turned round and informed Blanca. "All are in the cellar."

She was stuffed in tight black pants and a loose grey sweater. Her light-brown hair was long and straight and she wore a pair of black-rimmed glasses. I gave her a look of disapproval. Then we climbed down behind her in the cellar which was a dirty small room reeking heavily of tobacco. I nearly choked from the stink; it made me feel sick and lacerated my throat. When I got into my own, I saw a group of boys busy chattering with Blanca. There was much noise around. The den looked as grubby as the occupants. My head spun as I made a complete survey of the room. I leaned and held right to the wall and gave a second but very puzzled look. All sorts of things lay around: broken furniture, musical instruments, tennis rackets, cart loads of empty beer cans, cigarette tins, dirty clothes, cooking pans --- apparently never washed --, old rotten shoes, tattered socks, used up toilet articles and heaven knows what else lay one on top of the other so that the great junk pile nearly touched the ceiling. There was barely an inch left empty of things and people: young men with unshaven faces who were clad in big, loose trousers and thick, coarse pullovers, their shoes terribly filthy and unpolished. They looked at the newcomers from behind their huge spectacles with their owl-like, sagacious, impersonal eyes and laughed in their distinctly informal way. And the girls who didn't care to do their hair and let it fall in a massive cascade, and who sat on the tables, chain smoking. In a corner a boy beat his bongo drum and was so lost in his beat that nothing else mattered or existed for him, while another read out loudly a poem scribbled on a piece of paper. A third one, having perhaps nothing better to do, just watched the other two. Yet another, his back turned to the rest, went along blowing his trumpet, the veins in his neck standing out. The table in the middle was occupied by a group of boys and girls who passionately discussed something as they sipped beer. Leaning backward against a wall was a girl who gazed into space vacantly. The cigarette had almost burnt itself out in her fingers. In another corner, I found Byron busy playing piano.

A pandemonium that nearly deafened one, that's what it was. Blanca had joined the group that was engaged in a heated discussion about something. Every now and then a boy tried to kiss her. The whole atmosphere seemed so odious to me that I removed my hand from the wall and walked up to Byron.

"Beethoven," he raised his head and said ecstatically, "prophet of music Beethoven'"

"Yes," I nodded, affirmatively.

"Hey, boy, I've finished the Moonlight Sonata. Nothing exists, you know, just nothing beyond Beethoven's music, oh nothing. I've heard my call, boy."

"Yes," I nodded again with a sorrowful understanding.

"Beat it. You keep saying yes, yes. Say something real. Tell me, have you heard your call?"

"Oh no," I said, puzzled. "I don't know anything. Blanca has brought me here."

"Jane doesn't like my coming here," he began, "and probably you don't either as far as Blanca is concerned. But you people simply cannot understand the thirst of soul, its quest for nobler regions, for you are always lured by petty ephemeral things because you are petty people yourself."

I could only feel sorry for him: his unkempt beard was sticky and smeared with dirt.

In the meantime a bunch of these young men came to me, and then left, for I couldn't somehow bring myself to return their cordiality and good will, so shockingly bereft of formal etiquette. I turned back again to see Blanca and the boy, who was trying laboriously to kiss her earlier, dance to the trumpet and bongo drum. The rest had formed a ring around the dancing couple and beat time with hand-claps. Blanca was laughing spiritedly. The lonely girl leaning against the wall began suddenly mumbling something. No one seemed to care about her. After a while, Byron and I joined the group of clappers.

Two hours later as we got out of there we felt strangely happy. Outside, night had set in. A night perfumed with the sweet smell of snowclad earth. I breathed deeply, carelessly in the fresh cool air. After the close, excessively heated cellar, the open night was comforting. The street lay completely deserted. In the shadow of a wall Blanca stretched out her hands, saying:

"They are all my friends, my good friends. I've a strange feeling of being contained in everything. We are everywhere and everything, you know."

Meanwhile the snow had stopped falling and the cold had become less severe. In the pleasant weather we unbuttoned our coats. The shops had long since closed for the day. Many a rainbow-tinted prism of shimmering radiance shot forth streaks of light from inside the show-windows. We walked and walked in their diffused glow.

"Sultan," she called, "there, do you see this white, rare mink," she pointed to one in a certain window. "Well, I plan to marry a properly-placed, on-the-ball sort of multi-millionaire in, say two years. Then you'll see for yourself I'll have all the furs on earth piled up in my closet, and how I'll walk past petty men like you with a zoom, my nose proudly held in the air. Well, do inform me if you are in line for a few millions yourself in a couple of years," she laughed. "And there," she went on as she pointed, "you see apples of the season. I am starving. Some six thousand seven hundred and eighty two he had painted. I mean apples. Heaven knows how many did he eat?" She gave out another of her overwhelming smiles and left me dripping with the joy of her gaiety.

By the time we reached the campus we were nearly out of breath. Here it was a little stifling. We removed our coats and collapsed on the stairs of her dorm. The night air smelt of fresh snowfall and the great silence suggested how thick and wide it was.

There, sitting on her toes, she began. "Sultan! I've no illusions about myself. I know I am human and have my share of human weaknesses. Sometimes I do tell lies, I know, but in this particular matter I haven't lied. If only you knew how poor is mother's knowledge of geography. When

I spoke to her about you, she became very happy indeed; for in truth I hadn't invited any of my friends before. In the evening, perhaps, she discussed it with dad who, most likely, informed her that Pakistan is an Asian country. And the real trouble began."

"Real trouble?"

"Yes. That's so. She at once concluded that you are, oh, I mean, I mean you are -- " she stammered.

"That I am what?"

"That you are -- " she hesitated.

"Oh, now come on."

"That you are -- "

"Black'" I completed. "You mean colored, don't you?"

"Not quite colored or black," she heaved a rather long sigh. "But Asian." She paused, then said: "The same night she called me again, but I was pretty obstinate and wouldn't give in. I said I've promised him and not for anything am I going to back out of it. She said she didn't care much about caste or creed or color herself but that she spoke solely in my own interest, because it'll offend other boys of my age and consequently ruin my future. Well, I hung up. In the morning I boarded the first available train. That was all. Somehow I didn't like to involve you in all that."

"Do you really think?" I asked her after a few moments. "Other boys--white boys -- ?"

"Yes," she said firmly. "They won't let you know of it though, but inside they feel pretty badly hurt. Then the only thing they can do about it is to join a tacit understanding to socially ostracize the girl. This has happened many times."

"And how do you personally feel?"

"How do I feel? Crazy, didn't I tell you I am a part of the whole universe, an inseparable part!"

"Still you -- "

But she didn't let me finish and continued: "We are involved in each other's life equally. That was why I decided to go out with you downtown earlier this evening and let them see for themselves, I mean all the boys who whisper about me, love me, bug me, crowd around me, that I am with you and couldn't care less. I want to be free. That's about all there is to it. Already a whole bunch of them have seen us together, so what? Let them see. I'll marry the swarthiest, the blackest right under their nose if I wish. The most they can do is to start rumors. Well, I am quite used to their scandals. They will soon forget all about it and people do forget, don't they?

"That was why I brought you among these other young people who have been rejected and disowned by the society. Papers have severely denounced them. Well, they may be dirty and fugitive, living a godless and incoherent life, but, fool," she smiled sadly and resumed, "don't you see these are the ones who are striving to see life in its basic colors, without the sophistication and the superfluous trappings of culture. In their effort to determine new directions for themselves they've lost sense of the old ones. Believing as they do in the goodness, love and simplicity innate in human nature, they have so tremendously been disillusioned by religion, be it any; for in this highly civilized country of the twentieth century the follower of one church can't buy himself his daily bread from a shopkeeper who belongs to another. Why? Because the essence of faith is hatred for other faiths. And these young people belong to no particular nation, religion or creed. They are just human beings, kept forever restless by their superior minds. They may be wrong, but they do try to create love and loveliness from the confusion of their disrupted life. The birth of the concept of beauty is a purely accidental thing. And it is not all that important, after all. What really counts is: who comes forward in its quest and has the patience to endure it through?

"They are free and want to remain so. I am one of their number and cannot accept obligations. I neither concern myself with anything nor care for anyone; I just want to be free. Freedom," she stood up and stretched out her limbs like a bird, "freedom, my friend, is my passion!"

She sat down at once and said: "Now listen, Sultan, won't you like to see my room?" She stood up again. "Come, I'll show you."

"I would love to," I said, "but do you think it is possible?"

"Well, we'll sneak in somehow," she said. "All of them must be asleep at this hour and I've with me a key of the outer door. You wait here and let me go see if everything is okay. When I signal, come up."

Without waiting for my consent she silently opened the door and slipped in. I sat aghast, my heart pounding wildly. After some time she signaled. I followed her and in my bewilderment forgot to pick up my jacket. Inside it was gently warm. Like seasoned burglars we climbed up the stairs in complete silence and then entered her room. Her face turned crimson as she fastened the door and her body shook with silent laughter. She struck me as a naughty, bright-eyed, little girl who conspired with her pal to steal a piece of cake from the larder after the elders had retired.

"If someone finds out you are here, we shall both be kicked out of school," she said gallantly while my heart skipped a beat. "But in these small things I feel a strange freedom and adventure. You are the second to have come here. First of course was Miro. Do sit down."

I was standing in the middle of her room which was like any other girl's, except a bit messier. Old, worm-eaten, odd-shaped bits of wood hung against the wall.

"This is drift wood. I collect it, perhaps you too?" she asked.

"No, I don't."

"Anyway, take this," she removed a piece from its chord and offered it to me. "Take this, please. This is the most precious in all my collection. Last year I picked it myself from the Atlantic. And here, this one," she removed another, "the prettiest of them all. Take this, too, for a keepsake, a souvenir. I've nothing else to offer." She became sad all at once, put her hands on my shoulders and stood up.

"Kiss me!"

Flames raged in her eyes. Her face so close to me, her breath that nearly burnt me, and then, still softly maudlin from her faint perfume, I leaned slightly over her and kissed her on the corners of her lips. A fire, smouldering down the ashes for months, suddenly leapt into flames. I was suffocating with desire. In sheer madness I threw down the wood, gripped her shoulders and began shaking her violently.

"Blanca!" I shouted. "I am not a child and I don't need your playthings. I do not want you for a friend either. I -- I -- I love you and need you and desire you."

Hearing me thus shout and lose hold of myself, she stared at me in a daze for a moment, then jumped up, forced her open palm over my mouth, opened the door and pushed me out.

Behind the closed door I heard her breathe heavily, and then she perhaps collapsed for her violent crying began piercing the silence.

I hurried on tiptoe, crossed the corridor in great haste, climbed down the stairs and dashed out. The snow had started falling again. In the milky-white night, I stood benumbed beside my jacket and heard my heart pound frightfully

The snow got heavier and heavier. All around me everything was asleep except for a pink glow from a single window. Everything was shrouded in snow: doors, windows, the hesitant foliage of trees, almost every thing within sight.

I completely gave myself up to books, alternately working and drinking coffee till late in the lab or in the pale, lusterless world of my room. My grant ensured only one semester of study and plans for my departure were well under way. I was thus obliged to finish my thesis in the remaining months. Loads of books borrowed from the library were piled up everywhere inside my room. In their frigid, colorless world one felt a strange feeling of everything having already fallen to dust except reading and writing which remained the only sheltering place. Then suddenly, in this cold, colorless world I felt my passion for Blanca melt away. Only sometimes, while working in the lab, I would feel it too clearly, although for a brief moment. I would then raise my head, feel its gentle ache under my side, even wonder, and finally return to my work leaning over a microscope, heaving a deep sigh of both satisfaction and remorse. Strangely, before a month was out, I had regained my emotional stability.

We would still meet, though not too often. Once a month, even now at least, all of us -- Byron, Jane, Blanca and myself -- would go to our favorite Dragon and huddle around our special table and talk briskly. We still made whoopee at the Union activities and went skiing together, but, something had really changed. The earlier agony and restlessness of passion had subsided giving way to a slight regret mingled with a feeling of deep satisfaction and a sense of lasting association. We had evidently become equals now. In a way we were happy to have become so. Neither of us ever mentioned that night whose memory still carried unpleasant associations.

Byron's fit of esthetics and art had spent itself by now. He even shaved off his beard but his interest in music continued. It was a mature passion now which he pursued with sustained effort. His relations with Jane, too, appeared to have reached a smooth course. Blanca continued to be beautiful, ever-changing and a sincere friend as always.

In spite of this a profound curiosity, kindled by her charm, her mercurial temperament and her enigmatic personality, had found its way in my heart. It kept on smouldering inside me and thus never made me completely immune to her, although it is true I myself never consciously tried to get to the bottom of things.

By then winter had almost run its course. Snow melted and sprouting young leaves brightened the landscape. Some three weeks before the annual prom dance I came down with the flu and was hospitalized. One morning when Blanca came to visit me, I saw a bouquet of small white flowers in her hands. "Spring flowers," she thrust them forward to me. "They have blossomed for you alone, friend; kiss them." I thanked her with a smile and put the flowers near my pillow. She sat down beside me and talked about the petty incidents of everyday life. I was feeling so weak I hadn't shaved even once in the past five days, and my eyes closed every now and then while she talked. Once on opening them I found her gaze silently intent upon me.

"When do you plan to return, Sultan?" she asked.

"In about a month."

"Have you finished your thesis?"

"Almost."

"Sultan," she said very, very gently and came closer, "I'll go with you to the prom."

"If you wish," I said.

"Will you listen to me?"

"Sure."

"What if you allow your whiskers to grow?"

I gave out a short, weak laugh.

"Don't laugh, crazy. Listen, I've a bright idea. Let it grow for sometime then we shall get it trimmed beautifully, the way Byron got his. Then -- then I shall go with you and I, too, mean to surprise you that day."

"You mean you, too, will grow whiskers?"

"Not exactly whiskers. Something of course there would be. Believe me, you'll look lovelier. Now, you'll, please," she held my hand and patted it gently as she went on, "say you will, please, for my sake," she implored.

I thought for a moment, then said "All right, if you say so," partly for her sake, partly for some beautiful days we had had together.

It took me about two weeks before I could feel myself healthy again. On the tenth day, when she visited me, she put the bouquet of small white flowers on the pillow and took out a pair of clippers from her pocket. Next she began trimming my beard. For a moment I was surprised by her skill.

The evening before the dance, she took me downtown. We had ice cream and coffee at the Dragon. On our way back, she almost dragged me into a hairdresser's shop.

"This is our hairdresser, John. I've fixed everything with him. He'll trim your beard nicely and dye it gold," she said. "Now, please don't make a fuss or I'll collapse right here, crying."

I kept looking in John's mirror and my face kept changing little by little.

"Now you look exactly like George V," said John, tapping my back as he finished.

"Thank you," I said rather seriously, paid, and walked out.

When Blanca came out she looked at me and jumped up with joy. But I stood still as if glued to the ground. She had her hair cut short like that of little girls and dyed silver-grey. A young boy by her haircut, an old hag by her dyed hair and a pretty girl by her beautiful face -- that's how she looked, and one felt giddy looking at her as a whole. She felt my bewilderment and tightened her scarf around her head.

At the dance there was something of a gala show around us. She had to dance with a whole lot of boys and I, with many a girl. At a point, while the evening was in full bloom, we suddenly found ourselves opposite each other. We reacted normally in spite of the hectic evening, the dance being at its height and our ridiculous appearance. Both of us lowered our eyes instead and, as if following a prearranged plan, danced out of the hall into the corridor where the lights had been purposely put out. The iron railing faintly gleamed in the surrounding semi-darkness as it caught a streak every now and then coming from the hall.

"How far is your country from here?" she asked.

"Eight thousand miles."

She stood bent on the railing. Lamps were being put out now in the hall one by one till only the central chandelier remained luminous. The Viennese waltz was being played downstairs. The familiar, gently rising Blue Danube that in a moment almost touched you, in the next, receded way back into the distance, kept pouring into our ears and flooded our souls with a sensation which is so difficult to articulate.

"Sultan," her voice seemed to be coming from far off. "We shall cross hundreds of thousands of miles in our life but these, perhaps, we never will." She paused, then said: "I want to talk to you."

A short while after we were zigzagging in the streets downtown. We went to the Dragon, but soon she stood up with a start. Outside, while trudging along the pavements, I suggested quite a few places to sit but she kept walking. Somehow I felt she wanted to wear herself out completely before sitting anywhere, but in front of a huge iron gate, which was still ajar, she slowed down.

It was the ice-hockey stadium where students had raised hell two days earlier during a famous game, and the whole affair had to be brought before Dean Jenkins. We entered the half-dark gate. All the twenty-five thousand seats around us were vacant. Only the central bulb in the stadium was left burning. It threw a small circle of light on the lustrous surface of snow. Some laborers were shovelling the surplus snow, levelling the field for the coming game. They raised their heads, looked at us and got busied in their work. We climbed up countless steps before we sat down in a dark back row. The emptiness of the stadium was overwhelming. Our dim, small and solitary figures made us look like homeless vagrants lost in a vast expanse. In this place, where we had always seen life burst forth with floods of light and countless jostling crowds of humanity, we now sat overpowered by a dreadful silence. Way down the three poor, old laborers now entered the pool of light, now walked out of it, talking sadly from time to time as they levelled the snow with their shovels.

Blanca, who was gazing fixedly at the wet, shimmering circular pool of light, shuddered and straightened up. "You know," she said, "it was here that Miro started playing hockey."

"I see, you remember him quite often," I said. My voice was surprisingly pure of any shade of jealousy.

"I had a strange fellowship with him."

"This 'fellowship' of yours is a pretty difficult thing for me to understand," I said, "with me, with Byron, so to say with the entire universe. Strange!"

"You are mistaken," she said, rather hurt. "Not with everyone. Him, only him, Miro."

"Seems to be a very extraordinary person, I mean this Mr. Miro of yours."

She kept staring at the circular pool of light. "Miro --" she said as if to herself, as if I didn't exist. "Miro was an ill-gotten child of the Spanish Civil War. His parents met each other in their bitter struggle against the armies of Franco. In those days, while death loomed large, you would probably ask, who had time for love? But you see, who needs *time* for that? So, he was born in a cave. Shortly afterwards his parents were killed in the war and he was brought up by an old soldier who also died when Miro was barely fifteen. But before his death the old fellow told him all that there was to be told. Miro had a sound personality. 'I hardly know anything about my past,' he had said to me once, 'nor I even so much as care to know it. I'm going to be a great journalist. I've got to be.' In those days I had gone nearly crazy for him. He was the first and probably the last man in my life. I was always too scared of him, for he was quite capable of destroying me.

"'If you want to be happy in life, crazy,' once he had said, 'then cultivate friendship with the world. Yes, friendship, only friendship, all else is useless. Forget everything!'"

"His words came as a great solace and gradually restored the control over myself that I had so unwittingly lost earlier. But I wasn't that brave, nor had a mind anywhere comparable to his. He did manage to forget his accident but I could never bring myself to forget mine."

"So you never got over him?"

"Got over him? Him? Miro?" She smiled sadly. "Who cares for Miro! He was but a symbol. No more."

"Symbol?"

"That's right. A symbol."

I looked up at her, surprised.

"Three sons were born to them," she began in her same even voice tinged with infinite sadness. "Then mother got seriously ill and the doctor pronounced that she could have no more children. They were rather eager to have a daughter as well. Being well-to-do people, they went to a *home* and picked up the prettiest girl and brought her back with them. This I was told while I was still in the secondary school. The youngest and the only girl as I was in the family, I enjoyed a certain prominence over and above my brothers who, in turn, spoiled me completely with their love. My parents denied me nothing, they rather gave me more than my due. All of them loved me so much, so enormously much!

"Then suddenly one day, while my brothers happened to be out, dad called me to come and sit down. Mother was sitting next to him, her face deadly pale. Then dad began: 'Now daughter,' he sounded plain and matter-of-fact, 'that you are young and intelligent, we feel morally obliged to tell you everything.' So, he told me everything, except only that he glossed over one thing. He cheated me in a small detail.

"He said that my real parents were British citizens and rather poor, who had migrated to Canada. Shortly after my birth they had both been killed in a road accident. I became infinitely sad. That made him console me. 'Daughter,' he said, 'you've gotten it all wrong. You must understand that in the world every birth is purely accidental. But with you it is different, for you are that really very important person who was chosen from among hundreds of thousands of children. You must be happy, mustn't you daughter?' So, I became happy. Their moral duty was nicely performed. Soon they forgot. But I didn't. I simply could not. Not because I didn't try. Try I did: I've been to a whole bunch of psychiatrists since that day and have always ended up feeling: if not fools and idiots, they really are illusionists.

"That day, the couple, who are my parents, simply filled my heart with a horror which was never to be uprooted by anyone. They continued to hold me dear as ever. I was still the most prominent member of the family. But as for me, never again, even for a moment, since that day, did I feel myself the same girl I had been amidst them for the past sixteen years. My parents didn't care to know what was going on inside me; they had no need to. Father's work hours grew more and more, instead, from eight to ten and from ten to twelve. Why? So that we could become more than ever prosperous, so that we could outsmart our neighbors who had expensive furniture, and to outdo them was necessary in as much as we lived near them. Religion preaches to love your neighbors, doesn't it? So, you see, we were busy loving them, for this is the only one way in which one can love one's neighbors in this country. Then our neighbors bought a great big new car and we had it: dad's whole energy was concentrated in buying one like theirs, or even better, for ourselves. You see, dad is a pretty successful man.

"Well, a time came when we had all that our neighbors could boast of, perhaps even more than that; so dad decided to move up to some other place. Why? Simple, very simple indeed: we obviously could not have continued to live among a people who were no longer our like. So, there we were, in a brand new comfortable house in the wealthiest area. Father didn't rest in the new, comfortable house, he increased his work hours, instead. Sometimes he wouldn't come home until after midnight. Well, among our new neighbors, we were on the lowest rungs of the ladder. The game had begun all over again.

"Please don't think I am telling you a story of the like one finds in the Arabian Nights. This is what really and truly happens in our country. Here the individual is destroyed so that the society as a whole may be strengthened. Before the year is out, statistics convince us that today we live in the most advanced country of the world, that we are being fed the richest diet in the world, that we have the highest individual income, and, finally, we do not know where we are heading. We just keep running. In this game, one must only run and never stop to think. How many spiritual calories do we need a day, well, nobody tells us that.

"I shouldn't be digressing. Well, what I really meant was that my parents had no time to reflect. They, on the contrary, kept accumulating a great many things and continued to think their children were the happiest ever born. Perhaps they weren't wrong. But I had clearly changed: where

earlier I had always scoffed and frowned, I now looked at them with a deep gratitude mingled with horror and born out of a devouring sense of guilt. I was guilty, as if I had sneaked in this house of bounty and plenty through a back door, usurping all, while they simply tolerated me helplessly. But now our roles had changed. Instead of them finding ways to please me as they always did, I would act foolishly in order to give them a chance to laugh at me And laugh they indeed did. I felt satisfied only to be soon consumed by anguish I was no longer a girl, and felt I had suddenly aged. Anyway, my new life greeted me with a serious inner crisis: I was forced to pretend what I was not, to hide my shame, my sense of guilt behind a mask. No one had time to reason out this change. All of them were busy They continued to remain so. They had done their due, only mine still remained.

"One day I confided in Robert, who was not only a classmate but also my best friend So, one day we went to the home pretending to be man and wife. We said we wanted to adopt a child but before we submitted a formal application we'd rather have a look around and make a few inquiries For quite some time we hung around there, looking through their files Then I piloted the oldest matron of the home to a seemingly quiet corner and showed her a picture of my childhood, urging her to let me know whether she knew the girl She labored hard to recollect and when she did she got suspect. 'Why do you ask about that girl?' she asked me I told her she was a childhood friend who died a year ago. She got upset. 'As a matter of legal routine,' she said, 'the home must have been informed of that.' Agog, she ran for her files but in her bewilderment she had already volunteered the information I'd come for. According to her memory the girl had been brought here some seventeen years ago one exceptionally chilly morning from a park where she lay practically frozen on a bench. Nobody knew of her mother. As for a father, legally she apparently had none.

The same day in the evening, the matron called on us. My little secret was shamelessly let out. Everyone openly reprimanded my conduct. For weeks I was not allowed to move about freely outside, and at home no one talked to me. But now that I had known the truth, I couldn't care less. I found my heart raging with a fire of both crime and hatred A fire -- that consumes you from inside and still gives you a passion to live and hate and go on hating for the rest of your life. A lie had been born and we lived by it A lie -- when born between two loving beings makes them hate each other while until yesterday they had lived and laughed and cried together. Thus I began hating those who were better than I.

"Everything they did for me I now reckoned an enormous sum to be paid back hundredfold. I was indebted to them, so I felt, for their accumulated favors of the past seventeen years.

"The painful knowledge: that I was born irreverent; that no one yearned for my birth; that God created me in His image only to regret it later; that my being was a sin which was committed by the wayside, apprehended and broadcast, and remained unowned till it became the responsibility of the whole world and later, in a moment of mercy, it was pitied upon and raised with a care and affection generally accorded to a pet Siamese cat or a fragile fox terrier puppy, and still later, when it grew up, it was made to feel it had no birth right on the association that was made available to it, the protection it was extended, the food it was given to eat, the clothes

it was clad in, the love of parents and many more things besides, but rather these were the favors conferred on it to be thanked for each one of them -- completely ruined my personality I couldn't help myself. I wasn't at fault and the pity of it all is that no one was.

"Next I entered the university. They've spent no less than ten thousand dollars on my education to date. Another thought that haunts me is that I must pay them back each single penny they've spent on me and then I will be free. Last summer I spent all the three months working as a waitress in a small, dingy cafeteria; and all those mashers, those filthy truck drivers and mean factory workers snacking there watched me, made indecent advances, poked at my side as they smiled roguishly. So you see, I do have a passion for liberty.

"Once I dreamt I had wings on my sides and lured by the unchartered heights I was flying in a cool, life-giving breeze. I was a phantom wrapped in an eerie cloud, dissolving and reforming. Full of exhilaration, I felt myself strangely weightless. Dark clouds suddenly gathered and covered the sky but I kept soaring in their midst, rising high above them and swooping down, now dwindling, now completely hidden, emerging finally from behind a dark cloud. I had nearly exhausted myself, so I slackened to rest for a while on their fleecy carpet, and then resumed. Through the blue sky above me, the white clouds below and a silent endless space around me which was both peaceful and free, I kept riding this way or that, upwards and downwards with perfect weightless ease. Mine was a sort of soundless flight in a cosmos suffused with blue light and where freedom and vastness had no limits. I almost cried out, surfeited as I was with happiness: 'The sky is mine" My eyes welled up with a liquid warmth and I woke up.

"Many years have passed since that dream and countless times I've tried to live it once again. Every night before the usual sleeping pills I pray in vain for its return.

"At home my personality snapped in two, at the university into three, or four, maybe, I don't know. By and by I began to feel apprehensive of every man. I still do. Each time I see one I fear: one more step closer and all will be up with me. He will destroy me. And I begin to hate him, despite, and you will be surprised, that no one has ever hurt me. And so I drew a mist around my real self for the people outside, in order to elude their attraction.

"With my flashing wit, I made of me an interesting conversationalist; I could now talk charming nonsense for any length of time with remarkable knowledge, ease and felicity on any given subject or one of my own choice, from all the great books and all the reputed works on music, and British politics down to campus scandals, and that too in a single breath, in a single mood, or, different, but all the time painfully conscious of my own lesser self, my insignificant, ignominous being. While I am talking I am always conscious that this man, this handsome, attractive, intelligent young man is being slowly but surely driven toward me, I am now prevailing over him, so that it is up to me whether to embrace or reject him. But I'm also aware of his superiority over me, so he shouldn't come any closer lest he should know the truth and abandon me. Before he does so, I'd much rather abandon him myself and for this I shall stake all my cards: wit,

art, and, above all, all the assets of my many personalities combined in one.

"I haven't been able to come to terms with myself, let alone the world at large. Please don't think I didn't try. Try I did and with full honesty.

"Don't you think for a moment that I tell you all this because I think you are a priest and I have come to you to make a clean breast of my sins. I've been to them as well, and you know how I feel about them. They are just idiots who vomit mechanically their crammed sermons, the way a parrot does. Like me, they are also great imposters, so unable to help.

"I'm telling you because I am afraid we may not have a chance to see each other any more and I certainly don't like that you should retain false notions about me.

"We are very good people, really. We have built a strong and wealthy society and are genuinely proud of it. But there are always people, some people at least, who, even though they know all, are just incapable of doing anything. We want to help, but alone in the final analysis, we do become painfully aware of our helplessness."

She stopped, breathing hard and with a look in her eyes that was infinitely sad. I tried to look away from her so that I should evade the spell of her voice, of the words she spoke.

"It was sheer good luck," she resumed, "that no one could ever attract me except Miro. And he himself didn't come closer. Guess he did me a good turn, didn't he? I feel greatly indebted to him, Sultan. But -- but I am really afraid of that handsome man who will show up suddenly one day, whom I shall not be able to resist. What will I do, then? To whom will I turn for help? What will become of me? Tell me, please, tell me." She looked at me imploringly.

"What would you do then?" I cleared my throat and said: "I am afraid, I really don't know what would you do then, Blanca."

"So you don't know," she repeated after me in panic.

"Blanca," I cleared my throat once again, "remember I once told you that in our society we don't kiss our girl friends. But -- " I couldn't finish.

She looked up, stared hard at me for a while, then smiled with loving sadness.

"Want to break conventions, crazy boy? All right, have your own way." She closed her eyes and raised her face gently toward me.

As we got out of the stadium the workers looked with mocking surprise at my golden beard tinged with red, my jet-black hair, my wheatish complexion, the shimmering silver of Blanca's hair and our faces that were painfully silent. We walked the remaining distance to the campus in silence

which was only briefly interrupted when we passed near the chapel.

"People pray, Sultan," she said, "so that they can help themselves find God. But I search after Him so that I can love. Both are right in their own way. -- Kiss me!"

" Indeed, you are right, sweet girl." I wanted to say. But I could not. I said "Goodnight!" instead and left.

Now the final scene, the one which is so near, so shoddy, so deep, and crosses the memory for a fleeting moment, eventually fading out in the primal gulf of oblivion.

I see the small railroad station of the university town and the three loving faces so very close to me. My luggage is already aboard and I have a big green ticket in my hands.

"Remember," says Byron, "one day, when I'll be touring around the world with my private opera, I'll perform especially for you and your folks a real command performance, old boy!"

"And remember," says Blanca, "one day my ship will knock against your shores. Do wait for me, please, won't you?"

But Jane is silent, she doesn't say anything. Only she is looking at me with a pretty forget-me-not look and her lips vaguely parted only to form a sweet smile which would seem to reflect: "We are good people. Remember us. God'll remember you in turn!"

And then the hands wave, hankies flutter, and faces -- now get mixed up in the surging crowd, now become visible once more -- animated and sad and smiling through the ebbing day light -- and with the same suddenness dwindle and fade out, and nothing is recognizable any more as the train bends with the long, hilly curve; everything stays behind.

For quite a while Blanca's letters keep coming. Then they stopped suddenly. Byron writes occasionally. One of his letters reveals that Blanca is having an affair with a Ukrainian boy. Later I am informed that they have announced their engagement. She is happy at the prospect. I feel a strange uneasiness. Then month after month passes without bringing a letter from Byron. Today, however, I receive one. I stuff it in my pocket and come out in the open and feel the silent spell of a late afternoon of fall and see the saddest spectacle in the world, there, in the field. I lean over the rails and address the brook.

It is growing dark on the silent bridge. A long time has passed away -- little by little, moment by moment. The farmer is already gone and the breeze, caught up in the checkered foliage, has begun to stir once again. My dread begins to subside. I pull the letter out of my pocket, bring it closer to my eyes in the last, faint afterglow of the dead day.

"... Two weeks before their wedding, they visited Niagara Falls and sent picture cards to me and to Jane....

"Towards nightfall, after a thorough search of nearly two hours, the rescue party could only produce her corpse. According to the police report, she tumbled over the rail into the falls as she sat there taking pictures. It was regarded as a case of accidental death. Jane and I have dropped the idea of going to Niagara Falls for the honeymoon.

"So long. Yours, David F. Byron"

I read every line over and over again, and every word, too, until the swiftly gathering darkness blinds my sight and the shadow of dread gives way. A memory completed, -- a memory parts company! Now, I am free. And I proceed toward the future with no shade of apprehension in my heart. Future: the abode of supreme oblivion, where -- all that is good in the world and pure and chaste and lovely and fragile and young and brave turns raw, grotesque, ugly, and is shattered, left behind and completely forgotten, and though, on the surface of this planet, the birth of every man is purely accidental, there are some who cannot bring themselves to forget their own. They -- who stand upright and keep their sincerity, good will, beauty and intelligence, but fail miserably to hold their own against the onslaughts of their superior but inexorable memory. Such people are the conscience of the times who break apart by the weight of their own excellence, to be soon scratched out of human memory. This is the cruelty of the time and we cannot help it. Only the kindness of our seemingly inferior memories can make us stand face to face with it.

I stand up leaning on the rails and drop the crisp paper into the brook. Darkness floods over the surface. We are all co-sharers in the dark, Blanca darling! Rest assured, you are not alone; we walk together!

Syed Waliullah

THE TALE OF A *TULSI* TREE

Translated from the Bengali by S. Anisuzzaman and Ann Morrison

A hundred yards from the bricked river embankment, where it curves like a bow, stands the house. It is two-storied, enormous, and rises directly off the road. There is no sidewalk there, for no one has bothered to leave a margin of land in the front. But there is space behind. Besides the clean open area between the washroom, the kitchen and the toilet, there is plenty of land at the back. The fruit trees -- mango, blackberry, jackfruit -- have grown there into an almost impenetrable jungle, where the damp soil covered by thick grass smells musty and a deep darkness prevails, even in the brilliant sunlight.

"With that much space around, why couldn't some room have been left in the front to be made into a sort of garden?" they asked themselves. "Do not think of the garden that could have been there," reflected Matin. If there was only a strip of land in the front, they could make a garden themselves and, with some care, could raise beds of flowers, maybe gardenias and camellias, even roses. After returning from their offices in the evening, they could sit out there. They could even buy a light cane chair or a canvas easy chair and sit there and talk. Amjad smoked a hukkah. Well, for the evening gatherings he could buy a hukkah with a lovely tube, in keeping with the luxuriant garden that might have been. Quader was a good conversationalist. In the gentle open air, how enthralling would be his voice, how sweet, mingled with the scent of gardenias. On moonlit nights it would not matter if no one told a story, for couldn't they just gaze at the moon and pass the time in silence? These thoughts kept coming back to them, particularly when they returned from the office exhausted and climbed the stairs to the first floor, those stairs that began right on the road.

They had occupied the house forcibly. Of course, they did not have to fight nor did anyone accept defeat by yielding to their overpowering military strength. They had come to this town during the tumultuous days of Partition. Then, dawn to dusk, from the moment of arrival, they had looked for some sort of shelter. One day they had seen this house -- a huge building, deserted, forlorn. They were reluctant at first, but then they came in a mob, broke the locks on the doors, and entered the house with a victorious cry. They became so drunk with the excitement, like that of gathering mangoes in April days, that the whole business did not at all appear to them to be a crime. If any feelings of guilt ever began to creep into their minds, a burst of laughter would dispel them.

Later in the day, when the news had spread in the town, undesirable elements began arriving, also with the hope of finding shelter. But the occupants stopped the newcomers. Imagine! These men wanted to rob them of their possessions! They answered coldly and quietly. "Where is there any place for you? All the rooms are taken. Look over here. Four cots have been put up in this tiny dark room. You see only the cots now, but when four bedrolls of six-by-three feet, a few chairs and tables are added, there would be no room left." Sometimes they said sympathetically, "We realize your difficulties. It's been the same for us for the past few days. It's just bad luck. If you had only come here four hours ago! Just two hours ago that big man from the accounts office occupied the ground floor room in the corner. It opens on the street, but then what does that matter? There's a street light near the window, and if the electric power goes off in the house, one can still do his work."

Even though the tremendous change of Partition had disrupted the whole country, still there wasn't anarchy. Thus, the police came to enquire into this illegal entry.

Not that the absent owner of the house had appealed to the government to restore his property. Even if he had known that his house had been occupied by force, it is doubtful whether he would have done so, especially since he had slipped away with his large family for fear of his life. The police had been informed by those who had come to the house too late, because they had been busy contriving a similar robbery elsewhere in the town. They knew it was their bad luck, but why couldn't others have bad luck too?

Those at the house had banded together to protect this possession which by luck was theirs. Although there was no physical clash, the occupants were quite prepared for any eventuality. The whole matter was explained to the police in such a way that the Sub-Inspector went back to his men without raising any further questions. He was supposed to report on the issue. This he did, but in such a complicated way that his superior thought it better to suppress the report than to take the trouble to investigate. The idea of being sympathetic to the fleeing owner never arose. Unless he came back and requested the police to take some course of action, why should the police bother? Besides, the occupants, though clerks, were gentlemen. Granted, they had taken possession of the house, but they were not damaging the doors or windows, nor were they removing the beams from the ceiling to sell on the black market.

Overnight the house came to life. Many of the occupants had come from Calcutta where they had lived with the sailors in Blochmann Lane, with the bookbinders in Baithak-khana area, with the tobacco merchants in Syed Saleh Lane or in the appalling dirt and smell of Chamru Khansamah Lane. What a difference to find such spacious rooms with big windows-- just like those in the indigo factories -- and the open courtyard within, the jungle of fruit trees behind! Their delight was beyond description. True, they were not living as the owners did -- one room per person. Still, the fresh air and the sunlit rooms made them very content. They felt as if they had been saved. From now on the light and air would bring them strength and health, their faces would become as alert as the senior officers', and their bodies

would be cured of malaria and *kala-azar*.

Take Yunus, for example. He used to live on MacLeod Street which looked like a garbage heap every morning, full of dirt, in spite of the European name. With some hide merchants he had shared a shaky, two-storied, wooden house. Someone had once told him that the smell of hides was good for one's health -- it killed the tuberculosis germs. The stench was so strong that no one could smell the putrid drains; a cat or rat could have died and decomposed in his room without his knowing about it. Not bad, Yunus used to think. He had particularly liked the remark about the germs. His health was not good; he was thin and feeble. Now, lying near the window of the big upstairs room facing south, looking at the golden glare of sunshine, he would shiver to think of his old retreat in MacLeod Street. He wondered what had happened to him by this time. If only he had the money, he could go to a doctor and have his chest examined. It wouldn't hurt to be careful.

To the left of the kitchen in the back yard stood a *Tulsi* tree on a platform of brick one-and-a-half-feet square. One morning while Modabber was brushing his teeth with a fibrous stick from the *nim* tree, he suddenly discovered it. Being the excitable type, he shrieked, as he always did, sending a shiver through everyone's heart. The rest came running. They knew that something had happened, but probably nothing serious enough to call for such a noise.

"This *Tulsi* tree. It must be uprooted. Now that we have moved into this house, no trace of Hinduism should remain."

Everyone looked at the tree. The deep green leaves had become somewhat limp with a brownish glow. Grass had grown at the foot during the few days it was left uncared for. Amazing! No one had noticed the tree before this -- as if it had been hiding itself somewhere.

But suddenly the rest of them were quiet. The house, which had seemed so empty, which had seemed so deserted despite the names written with a childish hand on the walls by the stairway, looked different, as if the *Tulsi* tree, caught unaware, had told of so many things.

Angered by their stillness, Modabber roared again, "What are you thinking about? No talk; just uproot the tree."

They were not quite familiar with Hindu customs. But they had heard somewhere that each day at dusk the housewife in a Hindu family kindles the evening lamp under the *Tulsi* tree; with the hem of her sari around her neck, she bows down to it. Someone used to kindle evening lamps under this *Tulsi* tree also, there, where the grass had grown now that it was deserted. When the evening star used to shine in the sky in its lonely splendor, in the approaching shadows a gentle low lamp used to be lighted everyday with the silent touch of the bowed head, glowing with the stain of vermilion. Perhaps this had gone on for years. Misfortune may have plagued the family, the light of someone's life may have been extinguished, but the practice of offering evening lamps would not stop.

Where was she, this day, this housewife who had kindled the lamp year after year? Why did she leave? Matin had once worked on the railways. He wondered if she had gone to some relative's house in Calcutta or in Asansol; maybe in Baidyabati or in Howrah. Perhaps in Lilua. That wide red-bordered sari that used to hang from the roof of the black, two-storied house next to the railway yard, maybe it belonged to this housewife. But wherever she was, when the shadows of dusk touched the sky, she probably remembered the Tulsi tree, her eyes glistening with tears.

Yunus had had a mild cold since the day before. He spoke first. "Let it stay there. We are not going to worship it anyway. It's rather good to have a *Tulsi* tree near the house, for the juice of its leaves is good for coughs and colds."

Modabber looked from one face to another. It seemed as if everybody agreed with Yunus. Enayet was the religious one among them. He wore a beard and prayed five times a day. It was even said that he recited from the Quran each morning. He was silent too. Was he thinking also of the glistening eyes of the housewife in the evenings?

The *Tulsi* tree remained untouched. The drowsy, lifeless mood of Calcutta days was gone and the atmosphere in the house was congenial. The talking sessions were quite a success, and soon they turned into debates on every subject -- social, political, economic; even the question of communalism was touched on occasionally.

"They are at the root of everything," said Saber. "The country was partitioned because of the meanness and bigotry of the Hindus," he added. Then he cited innumerable instances of their injustice and oppression. Anger mounted in everyone.

Maksud, considered a leftist in the group, protested. "Not as much as that. Even if they did that much, we did not do any less." But seeing Modabber grimace, the leftist's resolve began to waver. Resignedly he pondered, "Who knows, after all? We can swear that they are to blame, and they can swear that the blame is ours. It is very complicated, very difficult to understand." He thought, "Perhaps we are right. Why should we be mistaken? Don't we know ourselves?"

His opinions, vacillating in confusion, swung to the right. Sometimes without knowing why, they moved to the left, and so he had earned the bad name of leftist.

The *Tulsi* tree by the kitchen could be seen while walking to the toilet. Someone had cleared the weeds away. The leaves that were brown and withering had once again become green and vigorous. Someone had been watering its roots. It was done secretly, however. After all, there is such a thing as delicacy.

Yunus thought that he would never have to go back to that dirty den of the hide merchants in MacLeod Street, that he had saved himself forever in the plentiful sunshine and fresh air of this house. But he was wrong. Not only Yunus, but all of them. They had thought that, even if they could not afford to have good meals in these days of rising prices, even if they could not send home the required amount of money, they would enjoy the rare comfort of spacious, sunlit and airy surroundings. All of them were mistaken. Fortunately there had been no strip of land at the front of the house. For then they would have made a garden by now and the gardenias, if no others at this time of year, would have bloomed. What a terrible mistake that would have been!

Modabber came rushing in announcing, "The police have come!" Why? Perhaps a petty thief had entered the house while making his escape, they thought. It was like the thoughts of a rabbit. When the rabbit can find no escape from the hunter, it suddenly sits down, closes its eyes and thinks that no one can see it. Why, they themselves were the thieves, but instead of hiding, they were keeping their eyes closed.

The Sub-Inspector of Police tucked his hat under his arm and wiped the sweat from his well-lined forehead. Such an innocent gesture! Behind him were two armed constables, who looked even more innocent in spite of their big moustaches. Silently they counted the rafters on the ceiling. A pair of pigeons, -- one white, one grey -- had made their nest up there. But the constables didn't need their rifles just to see the pigeons or count rafters.

Matin asked courteously, "Whom are you looking for?"

"All of you. You have illegally occupied the house. You must vacate it within twenty-four hours." The Sub-Inspector showed Matin the order.

So the owner of the house had returned. Alighting from the train he had come here, found out what was going on, and had gone straight to the police station. Afzal tried to look over the heads of others to see whether the owner had accompanied the police. No one was there except for the two constables with big moustaches and rifles.

"Why?" they asked. "Has the owner complained?"

"The government has requisitioned the house."

They kept quiet for a long time. Matin said at last "Why, we are the government's men!"

Sometimes one wonders at the extent of human stupidity. At this statement even the silent constables turned their eyes from the ceiling to look at them, as if their solemn eyes spoke.

A shadow hung over the house after that. Anxiety knew no bounds. Where to go was the question. Some of them would suddenly become angry. "We won't go anywhere," they would say. "We shall stay here. Let's see who comes to throw us out. If someone crosses the threshold of this house, it will be over our dead bodies." (Somewhere else, so the story went, some

students had also occupied a house by force. Even the most experienced officers had had great difficulty in trying to throw them out. That story had been remembered.) Their blood boiled within. "Never shall we leave this house," they said. "Come, whoever will, but let him know that he will have to walk over our dead bodies."

Their anger raged for a few days. They couldn't pay attention to their work. They couldn't eat. All they could do was talk, talk full of resentment, dipped in bitterness. Then the talking gradually diminished. And when they stopped talking about it, how long would it take for their anger to cool? After all they were not students. The other day they had proudly told the police what they were. Hearing about the requisiton, they had kept silent for sometime and then had said, "Why, we are the government's men!"

One day they left the house in a group. As they came, so they went away, like a storm, leaving behind scattered bits of old newspapers, worn ropes on which they had hung their clothes, cigarette ends, and the sole of a torn shoe. The doors and windows of the house, made like those of an indigo factory, were left wide open. But for how long? Colorful curtains would cover them soon.

The *Tulsi* tree in the back yard has withered. The leaves have become brownish again. No one has watered the roots since the police asked them to vacate the house. Didn't they remember anymore, if not the *Tulsi* tree, at least the glistening eyes of the housewife?

Why they did not remember is known only to the *Tulsi* tree. The *Tulsi* tree, which men may keep alive or destroy in a moment if they want to; in other words, whose survival and growth does not depend on its capacity to protect itself.

Ghulam Abbas

GHAAZI MARD[1]

Translated from the Urdu
by Karen Leonard and
G. C. Narang

Chiragh Bibi's sleep was disturbed whenever a dog barked or a cock crowed in the night. Rising, she would move on soft feet from her small room, feeling her way to her husband's cot in the courtyard. Seating herself quietly, she would massage his feet, her fingers moving continuously until she felt drowsy. Alia had grown so accustomed to the warm touch of her hands that this slight disturbance did not awaken him but relaxed him so that he slept even more deeply. Sometimes he, too, was awake, and then he held his breath beneath the covering. This covering acutally was his *lungi*[2], which he put over himself at night as protection from mosquitoes; but it didn't cover his whole body. If his head was hidden, then his feet were bared.

When Alia awoke in the morning, Chiragh Bibi had arisen before him, and he could hear her performing the sacred ablutions in the courtyard or praying in her small room. She always repeated the words of the prayer in a whisper, but the final words were clearly audible.

"Oh Holy Provider! In the name of the Prophet, always protect the master of the head of this blind, needy girl. Oh Holy Provider, in the name of the Prophet, put down all his enemies. Oh Holy Provider, accept my prayer that I may die first and he only afterwards. Amen."

Alia rose from his cot. Shaking out the covering he tied it around his waist. Hearing this shaking, Chiragh Bibi quickly came out of her room and asked with quick submissiveness, "Did you call me?"

Sometimes when Alia was present, she thought him absent and prayed to herself. "He has embraced me, full of sin. Allah and his Prophet will give him his reward. Of what use am I, a poor blind girl? What can I give him? I can't light the fire; I can't do any work, in the house or outside of it. Yes, I can massage his feet, but of what use is that?"

Chiragh Bibi was the daughter of the old *imam* of the village mosque, whose mother had died when she was a child. The *imam* himself was not blind, but his daughter's eyes had been blinded by smallpox. The *imam* raised his motherless daughter with great care. The old and young people of the village all respected him, for all the young men as well as their fathers had learned to read at least the *Baghdad Reader* from him. When the old man's time drew near, he called the elders of the village to him and spoke with humility.

"I am going to leave a fatherless child behind me. She has reached the age suitable for marriage, but her marriage has not yet been arranged. If she should remain thus, my soul will always be restless. All my life I have performed my duties, pleasant and unpleasant, for you people. If you would find a home for my daughter, not only would my soul be happy, but you too would be rewarded for this kindness, in this world and also in the next."

And the *imam* died. After his burial the elders presented the matter to the *panchayat*,[3] especially addressing the young men. "Is there any *ghaazi mard* among you who would do God's work and repay the kindnesses of our *imam sahib*?"

There was silence. Then one young man's sense of honor was touched. He was only a poor *zamindar's*[4] son, but because of his eagerness he outranked the other young men in every endeavor. Stepping forward, he presented himself for this deed of merit. He was Alia.

Many fathers of marriageable daughters, who had thought of Alia as a possible son-in-law, were dismayed. The elders remained silent. Of all the young men of the village, they had expected this sacrifice to be made by someone simple and stupid, someone with little importance in the village -- not by Alia, whose virtues made him the choicest young man in the village.

In this way Chiragh Bibi came to Alia's house.

Alia had a small piece of land inherited from his father. He cultivated this with much labor, and he and his wife lived on whatever grain he could raise. The wife was no great expense. She needed no jewelry or new clothes. She had grown up in the chamber of the mosque, used to daily prayers from her infancy. When still a child, she began to repeat her prayers five times a day, and to keep the thirty-day fast of Ramazan. Being blind, she had no work but to remember Allah. She learned many prayers from her father and memorized a few passages from the Koran. After coming to Alia's house her devotions did not lessen; they increased. On her prayer mat, which was spread in her small room for eight hours, she recited the daily worship in addition to her prayers. The fragrance of perfumed wood and incense drifted from her room, with the continual chant, "Oh Forgiving One, Oh Merciful One, Oh Forgiving One, Oh Merciful One," slowly rising higher and higher. Sometimes when Alia entered his house he had the impression he was in a convent. He respected Chiragh Bibi's religious zeal, but he himself was not convinced of the worth of prayers and fasting. He consoled himself by saying that to perform the moral obligations of marriage with a woman of such pure character was nothing short of worship.

Alia gave a bit of grain and fodder to the daughter of a village widow, Rahmate, for preparing food and performing other household tasks. Rahmate was about eleven years old. She was industrious, but also mischievous and playful. She usually spent the whole day with Chiragh Bibi since they got along very well. Chiragh Bibi would talk of Allah and his Prophet while Rahmate interspersed pleasantries and the village gossip. She was the only one to whom Chiragh Bibi talked of the things closest to her heart.

"Rahmate, my father used to say, 'Be patient, daughter. Some buyer will come for you, by Allah. One will surely come and lift you from the dust and embrace you.' Father's words were true. Finally my prince did come.

"Rahmate, he is more beautiful than Joseph; he has the dignity of a prophet. He is a *ghaazi mard.* For my sake he has accepted poverty. The village *numberdar*[5] wanted to marry him to his daughter and put one hundred acres of land under his name. But for my sake, a sinful blind girl, he spurned those riches. Wealth and prosperity come and go. When one dies, his property can't be taken along -- only kind deeds go with him."

Rahamte would say, "Chiragh Bibi, by Allah, Choudhry Alia is a strong young man. You are a lucky girl. That silver charm on the black cord around his neck looks handsome."

Chiragh Bibi replied happily, "Is there another such man in the village, one who can excel him in horseback riding, wrestling, or *kabaddi?*[6] His hands move so fast in the harvest work, like fish in water. He does the work of four men at harvest time. His hair is curly; his body is well-formed. When I massage his feet I enjoy it so."

The best of these times were when Rahmate crouched on the stool in the courtyard making bread, with Chiragh Bibi on another stool beside her. Rahmate would listen with pleasure as she described some of Alia's obvious virtues. "Really, Chiragh Bibi?"

Rahmate began speaking when Chiragh Bibi grew tired. "Did you hear that today Rasulan gave birth to a girl? So small, like a rat -- The *numberdar* is making preparations for his daughter's wedding. People say they are going to bring a band from the city. And last night five *seers*[7] of tobacco were stolen from Mithu's store!"

One day Rahmate arrived in a great hurry. She was full of excitement. As soon as Alia left for the field she burst forth.

"Have you heard, Chiragh Bibi! In the next village, Dhuup Charhi, the *zamindar* Umru has remarried. That wretch is sixty years old and the bride is but seventeen! All the villagers are saying bad things about him but he doesn't care. To anger them more, he has made his bride lift her veil, and there are other strange things. I heard he has bought two white horses, one for himself and one for his bride, and every morning they go horseback riding together. If the old man has work, he sends his wife Gulnar out alone! Yesterday this Gulnar came riding alone toward our village. She talked with great freedom with our villagers! Some boys followed her horse. Everyone watched in astonishment. Her color is white like a *memsaheb,*[8] and her hair is golden; they say she is very beautiful. She wore a silken *shalwar-kamis,* with huge embroidered roses, and on her feet were gold-woven slippers; a tinsel-bordered red *dupatta* was tied across her chest. Gulnar rides her horse with such an air, as though she were a queen! She rode right across our fields, and, Chiragh Bibi, Choudhry Alia saw her and even spoke to her! Perhaps she asked him the way."

"What did you say? He saw her? And spoke to her?"

"Yes, Chiragh Bibi."

"My prince?"

"Yes, Alia Choudhry."

"Say nothing more. My head hurts, I'm going inside." She got up from the stool and felt her way into the little room. Chiragh Bibi didn't talk any more with Rahmate that day.

In the evening Alia returned from the fields. He was usually quiet in the house, but this evening he didn't even move around. First he sat silently on the cot and ate, then he fixed his hookah and smoked for a while. Chiragh Bibi also sat quietly, but when Alia prepared to sleep, spreading his *lungi* over himself as a cover, she came to him as usual and began to massage his feet. But only a few minutes had passed when he said, "Chiragh, stop now, I'm going to sleep."

She was dismayed by Alia's behavior. With a soft sigh, she went silently to her room.

Soon, "Oh Forgiving One, Oh Merciful One, Oh Forgiving One, Oh Merciful One," could be heard in her room. The worship continued for an hour. Then Chiragh Bibi felt her way to Alia's cot and touched his uncovered feet tenderly. She wanted to sit on the cot as before the massage his feet, but she did not have the courage and returned to her room.

Again whispered sounds came from the room. "He has embraced me, full of sin. Allah and his beloved Prophet will reward him. Of what use am I, a poor blind girl? Oh Holy Provider, in the name of the Prophet always protect the master of my head. Oh Holy Provider, strike down his enemies. Oh Holy Provider, guard him from every calamity. Oh Holy Provider, in the name of the Beloved, whoever tempts him with her beauty, destroy that one. Oh Holy Provider, in the name of the Beloved, accept my prayer. Oh Holy Provider, may I die first and he only afterwards. Amen."

After two hours she left her room again. Touching his feet, she was comforted, and she saw that he was sleeping, covered as before; he had not gone away. She returned to her room.

Only a bit of night remained when she left her room again and approached his cot like a shadow. Her warm hands found his feet and as she sat on the ground at the foot of the cot, she softly kissed them. Alia changed sides in his sleep, drew his legs together under the cover.

When the dawn broke, a voice came once more from Chiragh Bibi's room. Now it was full of excitement and rose higher than usual.

"He has accepted poverty for the sake of a sinful, blind girl. He has embraced me. My prince is more beautiful than Joseph; he has the dignity of a prophet --"

Notes

[1]A hero who fights or sacrifices worldly pleasures for the sake of religion.

[2]A colored cloth worn round the loins and extending down to the knees.

[3]The village council, consisting of five or more members.

[4]A land-owner.

[5]A respected representative of a community who is responsible for the government revenue.

[6]An Indian game, in which "*kabaddi kabaddi*" is the cry of the person who runs out to touch or capture an adversary.

[7]*seer* is a weight of about two pounds.

[8]A term used for married European ladies.

Alauddin Al Ajad

THE RAIN

Translated from the Bengali by Ruta Pempe

Rain will come. One spring evening a wind touched with dew will blow from the south. Carrying the moisture of the sea, it will raise tremors over the parched dry fields and in the branches of dry, leafless trees, then condense over the top of some faraway hill. And later, with the whole sky breaking up into storm, thunder and lightning, an incessant shower of rain will fall like a blessing. Tender leaves will fill up the dried-out branches and twigs of the trees, and all the land will turn into hues of green. When the farmers go out to weed the new seedlings in the jute field under the noon sun, sweat will stream from their bodies -- with no one the least bit tired for it. Because merging like a flood with every drop of blood in their bodies will be the dream of a new harvest.

But none of this has happened yet. The month of March passed with no signs of cloudy darkness in the north. April came to an end and, except for some rumbling noises in the sky for a few days, all of nature stayed sultry and very little happened.

Then it was May. And still the sun continued to pour down sparks of fire and piercing heat. The seedlings of jute, which had raised their heads on the breast of the earth a long time ago, slowly shriveled up. Overhead was a vast hazy heat, and below, an unending barenness everywhere -- land parched and pale in the sun like a diagram of square fields for the game of *Baghbandi*. If, at noon, you stood on the ridges around the fields and looked, your heart would jump with fright. There the whole field glared like a witch with her scorched and copper-colored tongue hanging out. She burned with hunger and devoured the infant crops upon her breast. No doubt the wrath of God will be on us next year.

But why? There must be a reason behind it. The question came up one day after Friday prayers. Moulana Mohiuddin stood up before the congregation and began to speak: "Fellow Brothers in Islam! I am only a lowly servant -- you are all so knowledgeable in everything -- what could I offer in service to you? The Koran says the Wrath of God befalls the earth when it dwells in sin. And what do we see around us? Sons are not obeying their fathers, women do not observe *purdah*, and the world is filled with thieves, robbery and wickedness. There are no more prayers, no fasting, no pilgrimages, no alms-giving. Come, let us weep today and appeal to the Court of the Lord! Let us all go to the field and raise our hands in prayer, for He is the Most Compassionate, and He can show us mercy if He will."

The deep, heavy tremors of Moulana's voice echoed inside the brick walls of the mosque. Haji Kolimullah rose up from among the learned men. On his chin was a tuft of white beard, on his head a cap, and in the middle of his forehead was a mark from touching the floor through years of praying. He cleared his throat and then, in a voice quavering with emotion, he began to speak: "We shall, of course, obey whatever Moulana Saheb will say. But there is another thing we must all keep in mind: evil must be punished. Have you wondered why this drought has occurred? Let me be frank. God forgive us, some girl must be illegitimately pregnant. It must have happened in this region -- in some nearby village or even in our own village. We must search her out, find her, or else there will be no respite from the Wrath of God. We must crush the seeds of evil'"

Running the fingers of his right hand through his beard once, Haji Kolimullah sat down, shaking from the heat. Every cell of his brain was charged with a desire to find out the truth about the sin.

The prayer for rain was to take place in the sizzling heat of the midday sun on the football field, but the day before, Sufi Moulana Mohiuddin fell sick.

Haji Saheb was asked to lead the prayer on behalf of the village. Although at first he modestly declined, he finally agreed to perform for the benefit of everyone.

After prayers had ended that day, Haji Kolimullah turned his face from the west to the east. Looking far out into the distance, he saw that the world was not yet unfit for living, as even now thousands of people would present themselves in the Court of the Lord of Unseen and Seen, if called to do so He saw innumerable white caps, many of them sticky with oil or torn in tatters Hollow-cheeked and copper-colored men sat over the open field as if helpless, each with a prayer for a small blessing. Haji Kolimullah raised his arms and began to speak in a full-throated voice: "Oh God, oh Allah' Rest your eyes on us, and have mercy on your servants! You are Master of Heaven and Earth, Sun and Moon! At the slightest move of your finger, the seas stir, the winds blow, the waters flow -- at your slightest wish this world can be filled with flowers and crops. Give us rain, oh God; give us water; give us shade and peace!"

"Amen! Amen!" they all said together, in a single troubled voice of prayer. The white beard of Haji Kolimullah was wet with tears. Weeping and pleading, he finished the benediction, quoting from the Koran.

This way both the young and the old went to the field once, twice, even three times, to join the congregation; they kept one eye towards the sky and the other on the crops shriveling up in the fields. Young children smeared soot over the bodies of the boys who were their parents' sole sons, and, according to the custom, held toads and branches of poison ivy over their heads and played the rain game. They fed offerings of sweets wrapped in banana leaves to beggars along the edge of the river. Their necks

became stiff from looking up so much, but still the sky was as blue as a crow's eye, shooting down rays of sunlight with not the slightest hint of a cloud in sight.

After evening prayers, Haji Kolimullah remained seated on his prayer mat. He counted the beads on his rosary and thought about the situation. Shadows of fatigue circled his eyes. He had reasons to be worried. He had bought a warehouse on the Meghna River port with half of the several thousand rupees which he had made by black-marketing weaving looms. With the other half he had bought one and a half *duns* of land. There was no profit in owning a warehouse if he couldn't buy and hoard jute to sell when market prices were highest. He could, of course, lease it out for 150 rupees, but that was such a small amount. He didn't think he would be able to use the warehouse himself this year. And now he was himself farming all of his land. In this he was extremely foolish. If he were to lease it out, he could get one and a half thousand rupees in cash. But now he spent money to pay laborers and to have the land watched over. The cost of having it seeded and weeded only once was by no means small, and there would be more expense in the future. Yet, from the looks of the sky now, there was little hope for reaping a crop.

And he did not do so well by giving up the weaving-loom business either. Last year when he went on his pilgrimage and flew in an airplane, he thought from then on he was not going to be involved in family affairs. He would leave the warehouse in the hands of his sons and do nothing himself but care for his land. But financial straits spoiled those plans. In truth, he thought, business is business, and there is no question of honesty or dishonesty in it -- with good intentions, it will suffice to give alms to the poor occasionally.

The strong scent of mango blossoms floated in through the window. The sound of birds chirping in the bamboo grove died down. Haji Kolimullah restlessly rotated rosary beads through his fingers, and his mind gradually slipped into a daze.

Joigun, who came into the room to light the lamps, was startled. She said, "Are you here, sir? Didn't you go to the mosque?"

"No, I am not feeling well." Haji looked towards her and added, "Besides, the mistress may arrive any minute."

It was now fifteen days since his new wife had gone to visit her parents, and she was supposed to come back today. Haji was unable to go himself, so he had sent Khaled, his third son (by his first wife), on his behalf. Actually he was always against allowing his wife to stay with her parents for a long time. He allowed his first wife ten days, and that was when they were just newly married. By the time of his second wife, the number of days increased a little. And now, in his declining years, he could not be strict anymore about everything. His mind completely left family affairs after his second wife died two years ago. But if God wills something, who can avoid it? That which is written on one's forehead will one day inevitably come to pass. Months before he went on *haj* last year,

everyone had pleaded with him: you have such a prosperous household, but without a wife nothing is in order.

But where was he to get a bride? He was already past sixty -- who would give him his daughter?

"You make me laugh, Haji Sahib. Does a man like you lack brides?" Maju Pradhan stroked his beard and continued, "Just tell me that you want to marry, and I will find you the bride. And no ordinary bride at that -- I will find such a girl you won't be able to turn your gaze away from her."

The eyes of Haji Kolimullah lit up with happiness. A strange sensation thrilled his heart, but outside he appeared completely calm -- one should not forget the memory of previous wives so soon. Clearing his throat, he said, "Listen, three-fourths of my life has gone and one-fourth is left -- it is not time for making merry. But if she could, perhaps, keep house and run errands for me, that would be enough."

"Yes, I understand," Maju Pradhan said. "One can work with an old boat, and a new one can also do the same. But which do we want? Which will bring us across the river more pleasantly?"

Then they decided on a bride with a dowry of seven units of land, who was Maju Pradhan's granddaughter (by his own daughter). She was twenty-one years old. In these regions a girl is already old at twenty; in that respect her match with Haji Saheb was not at all inappropriate.

After cleaning up the kitchen, Joigun came in. With a grave and significant look, she pulled up a low stool and sat down. Haji Saheb had not finished his recitation of Koranic verses yet. He stopped muttering briefly and asked, "Is there any news?"

Joigun answered, "Yes, there is."

"Let me hear it." Haji Kolimullah's fingers stopped moving on the rosary and he looked up curiously. He was interested because he had employed Joigun to bring all the gossip to him as well as do the regular work.

"I went to see Batashi today. She was gathering mango leaves for her goat when I arrived. She started telling me this and that as soon as she saw me, but I couldn't take my eyes off her body!" With a furtive glance at the door, Joigun continued, "It seems to me her belly is quite swollen."

Haji pressed her, "Isn't it true her husband died quite a while ago?"

"No less than seven or eight months ago," Joigun answered, "but her belly looked only four or five months along."

"Really? Such a wide gap there?" Haji Kolimullah brightened -- his eyes lit up with hope. Lowering his voice, he asked, "All right then, did you see the man who is living in Batashi's house?"

"Yes, I saw him. He hasn't recovered from his illness yet, but he seems a little better than before. I was standing by the door and I saw him lying on the bed inside."

"So what?" Haji interrupted. "What does it matter if he's lying down? Do you think because he's sick he couldn't do it? Of course he could. What do you think?"

"Yes, I think you're right. Besides, I don't approve of Batashi's doings. Even when her husband Rajabali was still alive, people used to gossip about her. And doesn't everyone know that Chamu from Namapara went to her room? The blame fell on Chamu only because Rajabali found out about it. But who would dare do such a thing if he didn't get some encouragement from the girl?"

"If this is all true, then it's settled, and there's nothing more to say. I think Batashi has committed the sin. Otherwise why would there be a drought?" Haji began to count the beads on his rosary again. He sat silent for a while, then he said, "But still, let me look into it myself; then something will be done about it."

Joigun left, and Haji Kolimullah again became absorbed in his thoughts. The wrinkles on his forehead became more pronounced. The rosary beads began to move quickly through his fingers. Batashi, Batashi, Batashi. No one else but Batashi could have done it. This is what happens when a husband dies and leaves a young widow. Having a man is like opium -- she could do without rice, but never without that intoxication. How could a young widow forget it easily? Besides, she is in her prime now. She can entice one or two ordinary men with just an inviting look. Yet, to hear her talk, it all sounds very innocent. She said he was her cousin. He was a laborer. He was in danger with the black fever, and since there was no one else to care for him, she had to take him in and watch over him. But all these words didn't hold water. No doubt she really took the man in to spend the nights in bed with her.

But how should she be punished? According to the laws of the Koran, she should be buried up to her neck in the ground and stoned on the head to death. But how could this happen in this day and age? There are police now, with their own laws. Then what should be done? Beat her with shoes? Isolate her? Banish her from the village?

At the same time that Haji Kolimullah was absorbed by all these worries, his son Khaled had arrived at the edge of the rivulet in the dried-out riverbed with Haji's newest wife.

When they started their journey, the full moon was just coming up, and now it shone high over the top of the bamboo grove. All around was silent -- not even a light wind moved through the tree branches.

By now the river was only knee-deep. A narrow path met with the dry land. It was pressed on both sides by banks of mud, and a trickling stream of water gently cut through its clean sand. Clusters of tender sprouts of *boro* rice grew out of the water.

Johora bent down and took off her shoes with her right hand. She had Haji's youngest son on her shoulder. Noticing her difficulty, Khaled came to her side and said, "Please, let me take Saju."

The two were almost the same age. At first, Khaled had been shy to address her in formal terms, but now he was used to it.

Johora looked at the face of her older stepson. It was bright in the moonlight, and beneath arched eyebrows, his eyes seemed even more beautiful to her. An inexpressible feeling rose up inside her breast, like a stream stirring in the darkness of the forest. Momentarily overcome with feeling, she said, "Oh, are you sure you don't mind?"

Khaled smiled and said, "No, no trouble at all."

Saju's mother had died two years ago when he was five, and, being without her affection, he used to whimper all the time. But now things were different. He liked his new mother so much that he wouldn't leave her side for a minute. When Johora left to visit her parents, he climbed into her arms and went with her

As Khaled went to take the sleeping boy from her shoulder onto his own, the fingers of his left hand brushed against something as warm as the breast of a pigeon and as firm as coral, and it quivered like a *Chapa* bud in a sudden wind. Suddenly a shiver ran through his whole body like a flash of lightning in a clouded sky. For a second he noticed how the girl had flushed -- a fire-like stream of red flowed all over her face. Khaled could not stand still any longer, and he began to walk ahead through the trickling water, his face turned away with some unknown pain, as if a deep memory from a previous birth had come to mind.

But Johora stood still. Straightening her sari, she looked up at the moon and then back at the figure moving on ahead. She was suddenly very restless. Like a startled doe, she walked over the silvery path into the stream and stopped again, knee-deep in water. She pulled up her sari from behind and held it, drawn up at her knees. She looked down at the black water splashed with moonlight and saw her own reflection breaking on the ripples along with the broken shape of the moon. All of a sudden she raised her head and called out, "Khaled!"

"Yes?" Khaled answered from a distance.

"You're leaving me behind!" Johora said in a faint voice. "I can't walk. Look, the water is so beautiful."

Khaled came back. He said, "What's wrong with you -- come on. It's getting very late."

"That's true. It is getting late." Stepping forward a little, Johora abruptly stopped again. She looked at the glittering waves and said, "Can't you see how beautiful it is on the water? It would be a pleasure to die in such water."

Khaled remained silent and, face down, went ahead without a word.

Overhead somewhere a bird was calling out, "Bou Kotha Ko."

Johora crossed the river and shook the water from her feet to put on her shoes again. She felt her heart was utterly empty, and some hollow wail was slowly dying out like a lost wind. She suddenly shivered, and her body went numb with weariness.

Khaled was walking on very slowly. Behind him he heard a distressed voice say, "Wait a minute."

"What's the matter now."

"All I know is you don't understand anything! Why am I crying like this?" Johora came up and stood in front of Khaled with very wide eyes. In the light of the moon, the tears rolling from her overflowing eyes appeared to be jewels.

Khaled spoke again, "What happened?"

"You don't know; you can't understand anything." Johora wiped her eyes with a corner of her sari and said somewhat distraught, "Give Saju back to me. Let's go on now. It's so lonely here -- it's frightening."

While they stood face to face like this, a slight gust of wind had begun to blow, and now, when they began to move on silently, a snatch of black cloud was gradually beginning to move from the south. At this very time, Haji Kolimullah paced back and forth across the courtyard in his wooden sandals. He looked up at the sky and started with surprise. Did this mean his guess was right?

"Joigun! Joigun!" he burst out. "Look, we were right -- the sky is filling up."

Joigun came, poked her head out of the doorway, and said, "And still you said to wait and investigate it further. But I have no doubts in my mind. Batashi is a whore."

Haji Kolimullah looked at the cloud moving in the sky and began to race again. He could not decide what her punishment should be.

Johora arrived half an hour later, and even though he talked with her as he lay down, Haji's train of thought was broken again and again -- he couldn't sleep for a long time.

Finally he made up his mind and went to visit Batashi at her house on the other side of the mango grove in the east sector. She sat by the fire under a bamboo thatched roof cooking a rice gruel, and when she heard Haji Saheb arrive, she went into the courtyard with a stool in her hand. He was such a respectable man -- never before had such an important person visited her house, and she had no idea how to receive him properly.

Haji Saheb, however, paid not the slightest attention to what she said as she covered her head, for he was busy scrutinizing her soft, beautiful yellowish body.

After Johora had seen to the morning's work, she felt morose and sat on the edge of her cot in the bedroom.

Since her marriage, Johora spent her free time here, drawn by some strange attraction. What kind of spell was this? What was the attraction? Johora could not understand it. The appearance of the whole house had changed, perhaps, in many respects since she came to it, but nothing had changed in this room -- only a few new things had been added. The touch of Haji's previous wives was still fresh on many things, and if she sat here in the dark, she could almost hear them whispering. Then it seemed to her that she had no right to intrude on this room -- she was a thief trying to possess it.

"But is it my fault? I did not agree to the marriage. Grandfather said, 'Don't cry and be patient for a few years, and the old man will die soon. Then I will find you a younger man. Just get hold of his property for now.'" Johora said to herself, "To hell with the property."

She began to burn inside her breast, as if a hot wind blew over a festering wound. She could hardly breathe, and then she wanted to cry out. A wild anger glowed in her eyes.

Her mind in a state of confusion, Johora shook her bush of disheveled hair and went outside. She looked around, and her eyes suddenly rested on the mehedi tree beside the well. Its tender leaves were dense and thick from growing in the wet earth.

Even though she had wanted to do it for a long time, she could not cut the mehedi down. But today, her right hand began to itch. With quick steps she went to the kitchen. She brought out a sharp knife and began to chop off the branches of the tree, one by one.

"Oh don't! What are you doing, mistress?" Joigun came running out. "That tree is very old and it has been very good to people. If the master hears about this, he'll be furious!"

"Get away from here. I know well enough who's going to be angry and who isn't. I will cut it down because I want to."

"What does it matter to me -- I only work here. I'm only telling you for your own good."

"Oh, really?" Johora looked up. "You have to worry about my welfare? Isn't there anyone else in the world but you?"

Joigun did not dare provoke her master's beloved wife, so, frowning, she went back to work.

Johora could not say how it came to be morning, to be afternoon, and how at night the world turned dark. She felt as if someone had taken a knife and cut away a part of her heart -- it was numb to the gay ripples of everyday life, and there was only a pain there, like a slow-burning fire.

After evening prayers, Haji Kolimullah lay down and said, "It is just as I thought. Batashi is the one who sinned."

"How did you know?" Johora asked.

"It doesn't take much intelligence to figure it out. If you pluck the right string, the right note will sound. Ah, now there is no more worry. As soon as the trial is over, it will definitely rain." After a brief silence, he continued, "Next Friday after midnight, we will hold the trial. We'll see what happens."

Johora lay still, listening. Why was the scent of the mango buds so intoxicating? Why was the night so black, so dark? If the sun never rose again, it would be best. Then she would be lost from the sight of everyone forever, and there would be no one to see her.

With the touch of a soft hand on his forehead, Haji Kolimullah was soon asleep and snoring. It seemed to Johora that, except for this sound, a dead man lay beside her, covered from head to foot in a white shroud. She took her soft hand away and waited a while, quietly. Then she very slowly got out of bed. Very carefully she unbolted the door and went out to the foot of the mango tree in the courtyard.

"Where have you been all day?" she asked Khaled, who had just sneaked into the house. She came up close beside him and whispered, "You like to go without eating, do you?"

Khaled made no attempt to speak and just stood still. Suddenly Johora raised her right hand and slapped him on the cheek in a frenzy and said, "I can't bear this any more. Leave this house, go away!"

She covered her face with her sari and almost ran to the veranda, dashed inside, and bolted the door.

Khaled stood where he was and cried. Tears poured from his eyes as he sobbed uncontrollably. Early that same morning he had left the house, before anyone was up. He had wandered along the river aimlessly, over the ridges of the fields. Then he had gone to the harbor where his two older brothers worked in an office. But his mind found no rest even there. Finally he had turned back, drawn by some unknown feeling to return to his home.

Friday, after midnight, one by one, everyone arrived at the parlor of Moulana Mohiuddin. Even before that, the matter had leaked out to the whole village through rumors. But not everyone had the right to judge in these matters. The group today consisted of only the learned and the leaders of the village. After they closed up the doors and the windows, they seated the

accused persons in the middle of the floor and started the trial.

Haji Kolimullah had gone through the scriptures for three days and nights and finally prepared a verdict. With the permission of Moulana, he read it aloud.

Batashi had given up in despair long ago and just sat and moaned; once in a while, she burst out crying. Wailing, she said, "Oh my mother, that this should happen to me! Why didn't you kill me with salt when I was born and spare me this fate?"

"Stop crying, woman!" Haji scolded. "You had your fun, didn't you?"

Moulana Mohiuddin appeared to be worried. A pain showed on his normally calm, grave face. Slowly he raised his face and asked in a quiet voice, "Well, do you have anything to say?"

"What can I say, sir? You men never listen to the poor. We aren't even human to you; we're dogs and cats. Do we ever get any respect at all?" Wiping her eyes, Batashi continued, "If it weren't so, how could you charge me with such a thing!"

"But these things do not fall from heaven!" Haji Kolimullah said. "How is it that you have been charged and not someone else?"

"It's my fate. If it weren't, why didn't anyone see me throwing up when my husband was still alive -- I was so sick I couldn't go without tamarind and parched earth a single day. Why did no one notice me then?"

Batashi's cousin Rokimoddi sat wrapped in dirty rags and moaned. When anyone asked him a question, he simply stared back, blankly.

As the trial proceeded, droves of black clouds came from the south and covered the entire sky. Every now and then the moon was hidden, and shadows played over the trees, fields, and river.

For a while the wind stopped and the whole earth was still for a long time. Occasionally thunder shook the house and lightning flashed. Within the room, tensions and excitement rose to a high pitch.

At this same time, a man was standing behind Haji Saheb's house, under the mango tree. He tip-toed to the open window and looked inside for a long time -- inside the completely dark room. The house was frozen in a stoney sleep like a haunted house in the middle of a dense forest.

Moving away from the window, the figure approached the foundation of the house and then moved around past the kitchen; then he came and stood in front of the door. Each time the lightning flashed, he started with terror.

In a while the wind began to blow and the thunderous roar of colliding clouds filled the air. The door was slightly ajar and, in a violent burst of wind, it noisily opened. The man quickly stepped up onto the veranda. Looking around first, he boldly entered the house. All around was nothing but noise. The corrogated roof twisted under the fierce impact of a strong wind, and the timber fence resounded with incessant clattering.

He came up to the bed and hesitated, as if he suddenly was not sure what to do. The hair on his body stood on end, his heart pounded, and blood rushed to his head, blurring his vision. He thought, "Where have I come? Am I alive or dead? Is this howling a wail of loss, or a mad cry for intimacy?" He heard the jingle of bracelets, a deep slow breathing, the light rustle of clothes. "Is this the smell of mango buds, or is it the smell of hair? No, no, not here. I don't want this, I can't want it."

As he retreated a step or two, he felt a soft, smooth hand come out from the darkness and, with great assurance, draw him back like the refrain of a song.

Then the sky was filled with warring clouds, and the whole world shook with their thunder. A strong burst of the storm ripped the leaves of trees asunder, as if someone was mad with the fury of a wanton plunder. The churning of heaven, hell and earth filled the air with a music both frightening and beautiful.

No one could say how long the storm raged this way. When the wind receded, rain began to fall like strings of pearls.

The first shower came sharply, and it was like the intermittent wailing of a newborn child as it brushed over the roofs of houses. But not for long. The wind died down as if to the lingering tempo of *dhrupod* music, and the rain became heavy. Then there was only the sound of rain.

Time passed this way indefinitely. At one point a man passed through the open door, stepped into the courtyard, and, stumbling through the rain, disappeared into the north compound. Behind him came Johora in disheveled clothes and stood on the veranda. Splashes from the downpour drenched her sari.

After a while Haji Kolimullah, with an umbrella protecting his head, entered the main compound, panting heavily. Suddenly seeing him, Johora said, "Why are you so late! I was so afraid!"

"What else could I do -- I had to attend to that nuisance." As he leaned his umbrella against the fence, Haji said, "She was such a bitch! She wouldn't confess a thing even to the end. But haven't I heard the excuses and jabber of women like Batashi before? I gave them both fifty blows with a shoe; moreover, they will have to leave the village tomorrow. Did you see the blessings of Allah? Immediately after that, it rained!"

"Yes, it is truly marvelous." Saying this, Johora stepped from the veranda into the courtyard, into the falling rain -- she moved in a strange new way.

Haji called out, "Hey, what are you doing? Have you gone crazy? You'll catch cold, getting wet so late at night!"

"No, I never catch cold." Johora came up to the veranda. She pushed away a cluster of hair from her eyes with her right hand and raised her face, bright as a flower in full bloom, with lips overflowing with a sweet smile. She said, "Don't you know? This is the first rain of the year, and it is very good to get wet. It will bring a rich harvest."

Enver Sajjad

CONSPIRATORS

Translated from the Urdu by C. M. Naim

Talking about everything under the sun, we spent the whole day carrying baskets full of dirt to the trucks. We were free. Only when we looked at each other did we remember we were prisoners.

We had sat down on a small mound to rest. Hmmm, we thought, we're digging a canal.

-- Hmm!

Holding on to the last ray of the sun, we were coming back in a barred truck, watching the blue and yellow stripes run across our bodies.

Lights.

In the flood of lights we saw the girls. The truck slowed down. The young men among us smiled. The old man became serious. The girls seated on the back of the tonga slipped warm shawls over their breasts. The old man smiled. We said, Girls!

One of us said, Ah . . . Bombay . . . all this is a shitty mess. Our hovel there was better than a crystal palace here.

We wondered when the canal would be finished.

Prisoners, a girl seated on the back of the tonga said to the other. We were astounded. The truck passed ahead of the tonga, leaving it miles behind. We again started chasing after the stripes of light. All of us knew where the stripes would take us. We peered through the bars. One said, My town.

Another closed his eyes.

-- Delhi . . . Chandni Chawk --

-- Ambarsar . . . Nan, Qulche, Baqarkhani, Bal Bazar, Darbar Sahib --

-- Son of a Sikh --

The third borrowed a *bidi* from me and lit it.

-- Lahore is Lahore. Bhati, Lohari, Mochi --

The old man smiled.

-- Where were you?

-- I?

The fuzz above his lips was faint and new.

-- I? . . . where am I?

We burst into laughter. He blushed and took us to town with him.

I was in Mohenjo-Daro, the old man said.

We didn't understand a bit. In Mohenjo-Daro?

-- Yes.

The lines on the old man's face deepened. The fading glow in his eyes became bright again.

-- But that was a city in ancient times?

-- Am I not ancient myself?

--!

-- That's the same city where that dancing girl --

-- Yes.

-- But it doesn't exist anymore. It was a long time ago.

-- Nothing exists anymore. Everything was a long time ago.

The old man blinked his eyes.

The hair on our bodies rose in terror and we tightened our hold on the bars.

The old man laughed. That famous dancer was my wife.

He sighed, My city.

Silent, as if a snake had bitten us.

Then the boy with faintly fuzzy lips seated near me screamed, Liars! All of you are liars. We're all lost. None of us exists. You lying cheating old man!

He grabbed the old man's beard. The guards leaped forward. Blood boiled into the boy's eyes, turned into foam.

We asked each other, Now what kind of a childish trick was that!

When the guards dragged the boy away, one of us said, He's the bastard son of that well known dancer.

Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha

All day long we carry dirt in baskets to throw into the trucks.

Silent.

We are not prisoners. Only when we look at each other we remember we are in prison. Our lips are sealed with silence.

We are seated on a small mound to rest.

-- Get up, get up! Back to work! Making plans to run away? Conspirators! One of them came near us and growled.

Our silence is the conspiracy and we keep on wondering when the canal would be finished.

Jamal Abro

OF BLACKENED FACE

Translated from the Sindhi by Annemarie Schimmel; from the German by Elisabeth Mohr Rahman

Din Muhammad's face was blackened. Half his head was shaved, the mustache torn off, his beard pulled out and his sideburns cut off. His fearful eyes bulged out; the face was swollen. On his arms and legs, black-and-blue marks; his back was streaked with scab-covered cuts. His skin was torn and bruised. Thin, only skin and bones; bald like a plucked bird. A horrified expression on his face, he wetted his dry, chapped lips with his tongue.

He was as bruised spiritually as bodily. A string of old shoes hung around his neck. He came like a poor, roaming soul and stood in front of me like a ghost. I started to tremble, for I was terrified.

I jumped up. I did not find my shoes immediately, but shouted, "Oh, Dinu, is it you?" for I could not believe what I was seeing.

Dinu sighed. "Sahab, my little boy --" Suddenly it came over him; pain upon pain arose in his worried eyes -- and then the dampness. The nose dripping, the chin drooping, his lips thickening then pursing; it was as if he had been shaken by a cosmos.

I was also shaking. Putting my arm around his neck, I said to him, "Dinu, we'll go to town and report the case." His eyes popped out further in fear; he shook his head.

"No, no," he said, "the police put me on a donkey."

I could not help but letting out a cry, as if I had been struck by lightning. "The police -- in the middle of town! In the twentieth century! Dinu, you must be out of your senses -- are you crazy?"

He only looked at me. "Sahab, I am Din Muhammad," he said as if he needed to be reminded of it.

I stared at him inquisitively. Yes, it really was Din Muhammad. His forehead bore the black mark formed by striking it on the ground in prayer; his wrist bones were scraped, the feet twisted. The pious one who wanted to live in peace with everyone. I was overcome with anger.

Why had they pulled his beard? Why had this face, bearing the mark of his prayers, been blackened? Why had his dignity been assaulted, his honor tread upon? I saw Dinu's body, a perfect shape which had been trampled in the dust, set upon a donkey and reduced to the lowest of the low. He was beaten, bruised, stepped upon.

Again he shuddered, then screamed like a bird whose feathers were being pulled out one by one, like someone whose companions had abandoned him.

I trembled. The hair upon my limbs stood up like thousands of question marks. Why? Who?

Dinu sighed. "There were lots of people --" Before my eyes, people started to spin about, citizens, educated people, followers of the Prophet; they danced wildly, raving mad, beating drums as they wormed their way around street corners. They conspired with the police and laughed at Dinu sitting on the donkey, shouting at him, throwing stones, spitting and cursing him -- a human being, the son of a human being, an offspring of Adam. Even the donkey raised its tail, opened its mouth and brayed, uncovering its teeth. With its stiffened neck, it looked up as if to make fun of the sky Dinu's body had been made into a bloody sacrifice; dancing girls performed; offerings of thanks came one after the other; dancing girls plucked ten-rupee notes from the cheeks and beards of the rich peasants; clouds of smoke from the hashish pipes, groups of hemp smokers, jokes from the drunk, the din of the beggars; women singing, men twisting their mustaches; food trays passed incessantly. Finally, even the dogs had to vomit. And what a cover! Wonderfully shining, glittering! Silken, velvety, embroidered with gold!

Dinu started to become restless. He begged imploringly, "Sahab, leave me. My God, how are things with my baby?"

"What are you talking about. Who? Gulab? What's wrong with him?"

I suddenly remembered Dinu's innocent three-year-old son, a rose of a child. His name was Allahdino, "gift of God," but we called him Gulab, or "rose." He ran about in a little waistcoat and a little hat padded with cotton on his head. After his father's long yearning for a son, he was finally born. He was starting to speak in sentences, laughing loudly, with a tender knowledge of everything.

My commiseration made Dinu calm down. This large, lumbering man suddenly became quiet and calm. His eyes were extraordinary; in adversity, they would dry out; with sympathy, they overflowed. The outer composure of a miserable human being was broken down by the soft hand of compassion. After a while, he told everything.

And this is exactly how it was with Dinu. Tears welling, he said, "Sahab, the day before yesterday in the evening, he suddenly became still. It was diphtheria, they said. The doctor on duty said he needed injections. It would cost two notes of twenty --"

When I heard this, I understood. He let his beard be pulled out for the sake of this rose; his face blackened to save Allahdino. A man had allowed the destruction of his dignity to save his son; he let himself be dipped in blood to maintain the links in the chain of life. He had worn the string of shoes around his neck to preserve the law of creation; he has suffered scorn and curses so that his wife's lap would not fall empty.

Blessed by Dinu's hands, the hands which had taken away the cover soaked in the blood of hundreds of innocent children, the hands which had uncovered madness, ignorance and tyranny. He has stretched out his hands there, where the blood of the living ones had flowed on hundreds of lifeless bones, but where not a drop of water was found for laughing blossoms, there where age-old bones rotted away, wrapped in silk, there where the buds withered away, there where everything was enshrouded with smells and scents, but where the perfume of the rose was stifled. The dead had been brought to life; the living, killed; the stone was offered prayers, the spirit, murdered; the Golden Calf shouted, the old idols were again set up.

Blessed by Dinu's hands,which were the first to snatch away this damned cover so rich with curses! Behind his hands I saw hundreds, thousands of hands stretching out to split open the air, to measure the distances, to open the ground, to tear the sky apart, to make the hidden gods topple down, to destroy the authority of these false gods. Din Muhammad had snatched the reins from their hands.

I looked at his blood-stained body, his harmless face -- an innocent face -- and measured its hidden strength. His one worry had been his son. My soul was flowing along with his soul. My heart was beating as I took hold of his hand. We looked at one another for a moment, then turned toward his hut. Quietly, breathing heavily and full of misgivings, we stepped into the peaceful hut. The child was moaning in his mother's lap. She uttered a cry, "O Gulab's father!" The child called out one last time to his father. "My child -- ," Dinu exclaimed.

Lamentations broke out as the father and mother started to weep. Dogs howled; the air darkened and leaves from the neem tree fell, as if to leave the tree naked. The mother unknotted her hair as a sign of mourning. The rose lay withered. Allahdino was destroyed -- so was his mother, so was Din Huhammad.

Far away among the trees, beneath the tomb, upon the stone, in the gleam of lights, the precious cover was spread out once more. What a wonderful cover! It reflected thin glittering rays -- injection needles for diptheria perhaps. Outside arose the roaring laughter of the hashish-smokers celebrating the birth of Pirdino and the death of Allahdino. Smoke wafted about; loudly they sang the praises of the saint who was buried there. They cursed Din Muhammad.

SHAHID HOSAIN , ed., *First Voices: Six Poets from Pakistan.* Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1965, 70 pp., Rs. 12.

Lately come out of Karachi is this worthy anthology of verse by six Pakistani poets writing in English, the first such collection to be published in that country since its genesis in 1947. The wait has been worthwhile, for this is no ordinary assemblage of minor lyrics in tiresome rhyme. Reflected in the verse of these writers is an incredible range of experience: expatriates who have lived in China, Morocco; the young Muslim who encounters England and finds it alien; an Oriental poet who in Tuscany feels a loss akin to that of his own land. More striking is evidence in these poems that poets of the sub-continent, writing in English, have indeed sloughed off the tendency to mimic Western verse and have embarked on a productive search for an idiom of their own.

Ahmed Ali, whose other contributions to the world of letters are immeasurable, here makes no mean offering of poems stemming from his years in China. These are remarkable in their approximation of classical Chinese poetry -- both in tone and subject matter. Drawing on traditional images such as the willow and the plum tree, Ahmed Ali transmits with calm clarity the pain of remembering:

> Magnolia buds recall
> My loved one's cream white hands.

But there is something of the poet's Persian heritage in the winecup and his preoccupation with sorrow, for in these polished poems, three traditions are fused.

Zulfikhar Ghose, who now lives in London, probes deeply the imprint of Western culture upon his own. Conversational in tone and possessing a narrative element, his poetry is the most distinctive and perhaps the most successful in this collection. Explaining what the Pakistani first feels of England, Ghose writes:

> A child at a museum, England for me
> Is an exhibit within a glass case,
> The country, like an antique chair, has a rope
> across it.

A similar rope becomes the image of partition between India and Pakistan, forcing the poet to reject the vibrant life of his own country and to adopt England as his home. Thus Ghose makes meaningful the most intense experiences of his own life. No poet can do more.

The editor of this collection, Shahid Hosain, possesses a considerable poetic talent of his own. His verse is more formal, more traditional, than that of Ghose, yet the juxtaposition of hard brilliance in imagery with abstractly intellectual passages is strongly metaphysical. The influence of Urdu and Persian verse is apparent in his *marsiyah*, an elegy on the martyrdom of Imam Husain. But Shahid Hosain is also capable of delicacy

and restraint:

> Let us assume
> A metaphor of climate; let us say
> The skies were grey, but did not weep,
> The sun was warm, but did not shine,
> And few birds sang, but birdsong
> Was never absent from the memory.

Riaz Quadir, whose verse is the most disappointing, offers a collection of lyrics conventional in tone and subject matter: praise of love, regret for empty ruins, and grief for the young girl who goes to her flower-bedecked marriage bed. That Quadir is unable to go very far beyond his English models is evident in these poorly disguised lines:

> The shimmering bangle-jingle
> Rings the bell:
> It tolls for thee
> For thou must sell
> The liberty, thy breath, thy life. . . .

In the poetry of Taufiq Rafat, the rhyme is sometimes artificial and he is more successful with free verse. Although a delight in experimentation is obvious, his poetry is immature in its repetitious images and capital-lettered abstractions. Occasionally, Rafat achieves a metaphor that makes one wish that the whole of his verse were adequate to contain that single striking line:

> So in despair and love's despite,
> We move in a cage of twilight.

The poetry of Shahid Suhrawardy is perhaps most reminiscent of T. S. Eliot in its shattering imagery and reverberating echoes of speech and prayer. But Suhrawardy was of Eliot's generation and shows himself capable of turning his master's lessons into matter of his own. The strengths of his later work are evident in selections from *An Old Man's Songs*, which transmit with sensitivity and force an old man's view of the young:

> What are old men to do with their lust? --
> Only to stitch their hearts
> To the hem of your whirling dress,
> And scatter
> Into iridescent dust!

First Voices is witness to the fact that writers of the sub-continent have made of English far more than an alien language forcibly imposed from the outside. With these six poets, English becomes a vehicle suited to exceedingly subtle and intense visions. Their efforts tempt one to believe that Macaulay's concept of English education has at last borne succulent fruit. It is not too much to foresee a body of rich literature in the English language stemming from South Asia, even as those countries favor

the vernacular in their struggle with nationalism. While this anthology is only a sampler of the fine poetry that remains unpublished, we would hope to see it followed soon by a fuller chorus of these same voices and others.

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ROLF ITALIAANDER, ed., *In der Palmweinschenke*. "Geistige Begegnung," Band 14: Pakistan. Herrenalb, Germany: Horst Erdmann Verlag, 1966, 347 pp., n.p.

In 1966 the Institute for International Relations in Stuttgart, Germany, published an anthology of German translations of Pakistani short stories. It appeared as Volume XIV in the Institute's series "Geistige Begegnung" ("Intellectual Encounter") and is entitled *In der Palmweinschenke* ("At the Toddy Shop"); its editor is Rolf Italiaander.

In one of the two introductory chapters Mr. Italiaander outlines briefly the political history of Pakistan and his own connections with the community of writers and poets in that country, and in general justifies the edition and its selections and exclusions. It is most unfortunate that Mr. Italiaander did not restrict himself to reporting facts rather than engaging in political prophecy -- which proved to be wrong, given recent developments in Pakistan -- and chiding this generation of authors for not choosing politics as the subject matter for their stories more frequently than they do. Besides, he shows a cultural snobbery of the worst sort. It is by no means objectionable in an introduction of this kind to point to the difficulties writers in an emerging nation encounter, i.e., the high rate of illiteracy as an obstacle to a wide readership; but -- and this is the point -- compassionate understanding here takes the tone of a patronizing pat on the back. The praise turns sour when pronounced from a position of assumed superiority; it comes out sounding like an "A" for effort. In view of the title of the series, Mr. Italiaander's attitude strikes this reviewer as being highly ironical. Furthermore, it is not very helpful to characterize an author as "revealing the Asiatic mentality," since such a vague and elusive statement is nothing more than a cliché.

The second introduction presents a concise review of the precursors of Pakistani literature, the problems arising from the multitude of languages involved, and short biographical summaries of major poets and their achievements. It was contributed by Professor Annemarie Schimmel, presently of Harvard University. It is, of course, a monumental task to condense such a vast amount of material meaningfully in fifteen pages, and the uninitiated reader to whom this volume is directed can only regret that more space was not assigned to introduce him to a totally new subject. However, given this limitation, Professor Schimmel accomplishes her task admirably.

The appendix contains a glossary of vocabulary items and terms which were left untranslated in the texts, as well as short biographies of the authors included in this volume.

The body of fiction of this anthology is divided into two parts: the first contains twenty-three short stories by West Pakistani writers; the second, six by East Pakistani writers. Such a division, based on geopolitical reasons, might at first glance seem arbitrary. However, the reader will discover a marked difference in the narratives, qualitatively and in mood, between those stemming from the western portion in comparison to those that originated in the eastern part of Pakistan. In fact, he will regret that the number of stories included in the two parts is not reversed; for in literary merit those from the eastern region are far superior.

The great majority, seventeen, of these narratives were translated into German by Franziska Weidner, with Anna Valeton contributing six, Annemarie Schimmel three, and Detlev Chalid and W. A. Oerley one each. It is impossible for me to judge the accuracy or quality of these translations because many of the stories were translated twice, i.e., from the original language into English and then into German, and I am unfamiliar with the original languages. What is noticeable, however, is that there is, particularly in the West Pakistani stories, a certain laxity of language that goes beyond the colloquial and strikes one rather as jargon. This may be the translator's idiosyncrasy, or it may be a literary device fashionable among the particular group of writers whose works were included in this volume.

Of the stories from West Pakistan, four deal with the upheavals in the wake of the partition of India and Pakistan. Three treat the problem of people caught in the relocation process and the hostilities encountered. "Toba Sek Singh," by Saadat Hasan Manto, set in an insane asylum, is the only one of these stories to create a viable, unique hero in the person of Bishan Singh (see *Mahfil*, VI, 2-3:14-23). Of course, the setting itself and the fact that Bishan Singh utters only one sentence, an unintelligible conglomerate of languages, gives this narrative its special flavor. Unfortunately, the tour-de-force ending spoils an otherwise successful piece of fiction. Bishan Singh, who refuses to be relocated, is sprawled out in the mud in the no-man's land between India and Pakistan, and this after fifteen years of refusing to lie down.

And interesting twist is also provided by the opening selection of the anthology, "Primarily Autobiographical," by Q. N. Shahab. The narrator is the traditional fictional hero of Urdu literature who cynically adjusts from a pre-Independence to a post-Independence existence and who sarcastically informs the reader that the new freedom for the Muslims in Pakistan is the availability of alcohol, but that at least Pakistan protects the faith of girls who, being refugees, are forced into prostitution.

Five of the West Pakistani stories deserve special mention because they stand out from the rest stylistically -- though that may be hard to judge in translation -- and in subject matter and formal aspects. They are more concentrated, more integrated, and lead better to the point they wish to make. There is the story of twenty-one-year-old Otto Krüger ("Hitchhiking," by Qurratulayn Hydar), who is on a world tour to gather experience and who is killed by a stray bullet in Vietnam. Even though Krüger is to a large extent stereotyped as a serious and intense German, his story is unencumbered by unnecessary detail. Every word in this sparse narrative contributes directly, in contrast to many of the other stories. Simplicity of expression is also characteristic of Saadat Hasan Manto's "The Black Shalwar," which deals with an interesting though not original system of

barter. It is part confidence game, part a Robin Hood story, but without being so pat, as are many of the West Pakistani stories, which makes for so much tedium.

Very touching, though often choppy and devoid of necessary transitions, is Mumtaz Shireen's "The Defeat." It clearly bears the imprint of John Steinbeck (the author translated Steinbeck's *The Pearl* into Urdu), depicting an old man's tenacious struggle to retain his dignity, a fight he inevitably loses. Equally unforgettable is a peasant's struggle, created by Sagheer Hussain in "The Lonely Scholar." This peasant finds the means to attend the university only in his old age. At the university he leads a lonely existence, being mocked by the younger students. He finally meets a young poet and spends a night conversing with him, just as he had envisioned college life to be. But because he fears the poet will tire of him on closer acquaintance, he leaves the university, returning to his village to cherish the memory of this one night.

The outstanding selection among those from West Pakistan is "Of Blackened Face," by Jamal Abro (see p. 153 of this issue). Not only is the story excellent, but it is formally unique among its companions. Written in almost telegram style, it is at the same time a symbolic construct of imagery, and the combination creates a startling and intriguing tension. To achieve social protest with subtlety is in itself remarkable, but to achieve it in this form is doubly admirable. The story concerns a cobbler whose body bears all the marks of human cruelty. He had stolen a silken cloth from a grave which had been decorated with it in celebration of the birth of a wealthy man's son. The reason for the theft was poverty: the cobbler's own son was ill with diphtheria, and the medicine cost more than the cobbler had. Upon discovery of the theft, the city people had trampled, brutalized, stoned, and dehumanized him, and as a final indignity led him through town on a donkey. The silken cloth is then put back on the grave and the cobbler's son dies.

The remaining West Pakistani stories need not be mentioned in detail, for nothing distinguishes them. They all share a noted absence of imagery, and where it is employed it fails to be integral to the story and strikes one as being tagged on. Furthermore, readers who expect a great deal of local color permeating these pages will be disappointed, the publisher's advertising notwithstanding. No "mysterious glamor of a strange world," but rather pettiness, poverty, corruption, and greed are the themes most frequently used. Many of the stories show indebtedness to foreign writers -- Böll, Hesse, Steinbeck, to mention but a few -- and most of them do not manage to go beyond being imitations.

The stories from East Pakistan are radically different and all bear discussing. Among them are two contributions by Syed Waliullah, "The Cargo" and "The Way Out," which, being so divergent in subject matter and treatment, testify to the author's wide range and versatility. "The Cargo" is my favorite of the entire volume (see *Mahfil*, II, 2:23-27). It tells the simple story of two young fishermen and an orphan waiting in vain for a cargo of molasses. They are hungry and dread returning home empty-handed to their hungry families. An old man asks to be taken home by them but dies during the voyage. After the fishermen deliver the corpse to his

relatives, they go on down the river to their own homes. What makes this tale so irresistible is the mood permeating it. It is a fully lyrical mood, subdued in tone, in which the themes of life and death are treated. The great manifestations of nature, water, night, and moon, the noises come alive in Waliullah's poetical language; night, death, and the river are viable agents without being abstracted personifications. Hovering over the narrative is a sense of mystery that allows the reader to participate in this world of wonder and be touched by the phenomena of life and death.

"The Way Out" takes us into a totally different world, that of a train full of refugees. A young man, haunted by memories of the bloodshed he saw during the partition, tries desperately to establish a link of communication with a little girl sitting across the aisle from him. However, his attempts fail; he frightens the girl into thinking he is mad, and in order to protect her from this fear he searches the compartment to find the deranged man. When he cannot find him there, he opens the door of the moving train to look for him outside. Here is a story which deals with a brutally grim reality in a fashion that lifts it out of the trite and sentimental which mark so many of the West Pakistan stories; and its simultaneous starkness and subtlety fill the reader with horror and compassion. Just as in "The Cargo," the author here takes an individual situation, but intensifies it so that it transcends the purely individual.

A similar process is at work in Syed Mahmudur Rahman's "The Parade," in which an idealistic and dedicated village teacher searches for means to keep his students uninvolved in corrupt politics until their religious education is completed and has made them righteous and pure men who will then end all corruption as the new generation of leaders. He sees his hopes thwarted and is upstaged by the politicians; at the end, he is left not only to face his failure but to see the very strategy he had devised to protect his students perverted to seduce them. Here again the writer takes a situation and locality which are, in themselves, of little import and lets shine through them a significance of a far wider impact.

The central image of "The Leader," by Abu Jafar Shamsuddin is that of a python that seems to want to devour everything. It is, structurally, a classic short story in that it concentrates on an extraordinary event and does so concisely. The narrator, who directs a good deal of sarcasm toward himself, earlier in life had discovered his talents as a party speaker quite by accident, because he was attracted to a party functionary's beautiful sister. One day, at the time when the famine of the 1950's was already being felt, he spoke on foreign policy at a large rally in Bengal. He saw an immense train of emaciated women approach from a distance. This sight so paralyzed the speaker that, when the women were quite close and screamed for rice, he felt so threatened, as by a python, that he took to his heels and fled. The trouble is that years later he is still running. What strikes one particularly in this story is the horrifying reality of hunger and the discrepancy of this reality to the setting of a rally, the speech on foreign affairs, and the speaker's own motives. All elements of the narrative are well integrated, and the tone in which it is told unites the incongruity and absurdity of what it told.

In Sarakat Osman's "How Abed Ali Got to Heaven," we again encounter a very simple tale in a very simple form with not only shattering social implications but also implications for transcending the narrow confines of its characters and setting. We meet a very poor man who dreams of heaven as a place without work and whose wishes for possessions are modest indeed. He even has a fixed image of the houris, a touching fusion of his wife and a young girl he once saw at a railroad station. When he is fraudulently indicted in a court of law, his defense and the necessary bribes to officials cost him all his money. He dies at night, making possible a naked burial, which is illegal but cheap. His widow spends her last two rupees for funeral prayers.

A widow is also the central character of the last story in the collection, by M. Abu Taher. The title could as well be translated "The Sacrifice" as "The Victim." This twenty-year-old girl follows her mother's footsteps in her desire to remain faithful to her dead husband's memory; she thus refuses to remarry, thereby condemning herself and her mother to the most abject poverty. Her great beauty, which makes it impossible for her to find work and to mingle with other people, keeps her indoors. Once, however, she ventures to market at dawn, before anyone is about on the streets, and she is trapped by a white slaver. When she realizes the fate that awaits her, she drowns herself rather than submit.

All the selections in this volume share in common the sense of victimization. Their protagonists are the little people, at the mercy of corruption and defeated in their efforts to maintain themselves and their families, and most are thwarted in trying to salvage some personal human dignity. None of the twenty-nine stories gives a glimpse of a world that is or promises to be orderly. Neither are there apocalyptic visions or great passions except, perhaps, the image of the python in "The Leader." It is this conformity of outlook that makes the collection somewhat suspect. How far is it truly representative of Pakistani literature? Is it the editor's predilection of mood, tone, and subject matter, or is the lack of variety and span really typical for contemporary writers, as the publisher's advertising suggests? The example of "The Cargo" seems to indicate otherwise.

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SIR MUHAMMAD IQBAL. *Javid-nama*. Translated from the Persian with Introduction and Notes by A. J. Arberry. London: Allen & Unwin, 1966, 151 pp.

English was the first language into which one of the major works of Iqbal, *asrār-e khodī* ("secrets of the self"), was translated. First published in Lahore in 1915, that philosophical poem came out in England only five years later in the translation by the old master, Professor R. A. Nicholson, who included in his translation the text of a letter from the poet's own pen elucidating some of his thoughts. *Jāvid-nāma*, his most significant work, however, was to be introduced to the Western world

first in an Italian translation (1952), then in German (1957); only in 1961, nearly thirty years after the publication of the original text in 1932, was an English rendering printed in Lahore.[1] This English version of the poem, being written in verse form, does not satisfy the needs of scholars who care more about exactness than elegance. Despite its charm and beauty of style, this version remains a very free translation, which, however much enjoyable for some, is less reliable for others. Moreover, it does not provide the reader unfamiliar with Persian with sufficient explanations of the text, without which the depth of many ideas in the poem and their background cannot be felt and appreciated.

These were perhaps the reasons which motivated the late Professor A. J. Arberry to prepare a new translation. Arberry was a great master of Islamic literatures who many times had proved his unique ability by translating some of the famous works of literature, philosophy, and religion from Arabic and Persian into English. This was not the first time he put his hand to Iqbal. He was drawn to the great poet-philosopher many years before. Already in 1947 he had translated *The Tulip of Sinai*, a section of the book *payām-e mashreq* ("the message of the East"); in 1948, *The Persian Psalms (zabur-e 'ajam)*; in 1953, *The Mysteries of Selflessness (romuz-e bekhodī)*; and finally in 1955, *The Complaint and Answer*, part of a book entitled *bāng-e darā* ("call of the caravan").

Scholars unanimously consider *jāvid-nāma* as Iqbal's *magnum opus*, the *Divine Comedy* of the Islamic East and a modern classic of world literature. Indeed, the poetic beauty of this work is as fascinating as to rank it among the best poems of classical Persian literature. Its philosophy, born out of a deeply-felt concern for the misery and decadence in which the Muslims of the subcontinent and of all the Middle Eastern countries were submerged, was doubtlessly of such strong impetus as to help create a new nation. But the message of *jāvid-nāma* is too sublime in its vision to be limited to the fate of Muslims only. It is directed to mankind in general. Its scope is to form a new man who is fully aware of his self, potentially creative and actively sharing with God in the task of ruling over the whole universe. One should read along with this work Iqbal's *asrār-e khodī*, *romuz-e bekhodī* and *payām-e mashreq*, now fully available in excellent German translations,[2] in order to realize that the poet, though immediately occupied with the state of the Muslim nations -- their cultural and religious entity being threatened by blind imitation and hasty import of only the gaudy values and habits of the West -- is trying to build a more comprehensive system of thought by way of synthesizing the egocentric and materialistic concept of life prevailing in the West with the rather spiritually-oriented wisdom of the East. Thus, he hopes to bring about a practical philosophy which would encompass all domains of human existence and would be universally applicable to life on earth.

Obviously, it is not within the limits and scope of this review even to touch simply on the philosophy of Iqbal. Interested scholars can find ample and ever-increasing studies of Iqbal's philosophy in many languages.

Whatever place he may finally assume in the pantheon of human culture among the great poets and thinkers of the world, it remains a fact that Iqbal with his ideas helped a great nation of Muslims to be born and to secure its independence. He also managed with his works to set up a lighthouse for that nation which many future generations will look to for guidance at a time when the political turbulence of the poet's own age will no longer exist. In addition, the problems of man's quest for peace with himself and his destiny, and man's need for an answer to the essential and everlasting problems of existence have also occupied the poet. The people of Pakistan have every reason to be proud of Iqbal as the great spiritual founder of their state who so decisively effected the course of history for their country and who, at the same time, was a genius which their land gave to the whole world.

Iranians are equally filled with both gratitude to and pride in Iqbal. They are grateful for the tremendous wealth of thought and poetic beauty with which he enriched Persian poetry, which perhaps never before him was used with such precision in expression of philosophical ideas. They are proud because of their cultural heritage and the great classical literature from which Iqbal derived so much. One could even say that he identified himself with the mainstream of Iran's old culture. He not only employed the vehicle of Persian language in almost all of his more important and significant works, but he also made no one less than Maulānā Jalāl al-din Rūmī his leader through the cosmic spheres. His attachment to Maulānā Rūmī can be felt everywhere in his poetry. Despite the fact that Persian poetry had a long and deeply established tradition in India, Iqbal's achievement must be considered unique in every respect. During his lifetime Persian was no longer the court or official language of India. The old literary traditions were fading; Western influences were growing with the spread of English, which had long since pushed Persian aside. Nevertheless, we find Iqbal, who started writing Persian poems as late as 1915 when he was already forty-two years old, using that language with all its poetic expressions and its conventional figures of speech so remarkably well and so superbly that it would be no exaggeration to say that he animated that language to new heights of expression and thought. Iqbal's amazing mastery in writing Persian poetry must appear even more an astonishing mystery if we remember that he, according to his biographers, could hardly speak Persian. Two short letters in Persian which he wrote in 1932 to the late Professor Sa'id Nafisi[3] clearly show the gap between the rather clumsy style he might have learned in his environment for practical purposes such as letter writing, conversations, etc., and the knowledge he derived from the deep ocean of a literature many centuries old, which served as the course of inspiration for such a work as *jāvid-nāma*.

Professor Arberry's style of translation is often criticized for lack of conformity with modern taste and for the use of some obsolete words and grammatical forms which alienate his language from that of present-day readers. No matter how true this criticism might be, one must always keep in mind that Arberry was in the first instance a scholar to whom accuracy was a far more important criterion of translation than the external problems of form and style, which are the concern of poets and artists. The lucky combination of both remains a rarity. The Italian and German readers of

jāvid-nāma are perhaps more fortunate in that respect. *Il poema celeste* is translated, as Italian friends and colleagues will agree and confirm, in an extremely elegant and graceful style which, though in prose, has a great poetic charm. In addition to that, Professor Bausani has furnished his translation with a large number of footnotes which quite often are more than simply an elucidation of a reference or an identification of a proper name. In many cases, he embarks on commenting upon the background of a statement and explains Iqbal's philosophy. Professor Schimmel's German translation is a *Nachdichtung*, a poetic rendering; yet her scholarly commitment in itself is a safe guarantee against any deviation from the original text, though a certain linguistic freedom can never be avoided in a verse translation. Both Schimmel and Arberry have placed the explanatory notes at the end of the work. Besides that, Schimmel provides the reader with an alphabetical list of the names of persons and places which she explains. The lack of a similar index, or at least a cross reference, in the English translation often confronts the non-Persian reader with a problem of understanding. The word *alast*, for example, occurs in *jāvid-nāma* several times. In verse 273 -- Arberry's version is numbered -- it is rendered as "The day primordial" and is further explained in the notes. In verse 2131, we find "a moment of Alast" for the same term without an explanation or a cross reference in the notes. Another example would be *haidar*, which is explained with a reference to verse 1346, but passed over without a note in verse 2167. Similarly, *azar* is explained in verse 605, but not in verse 716. These are just a few random selections to show that an alphabetical list of names and places, as well as cross referencing, would have been a very useful adjunct to this volume.

In this general context of scholarly accoutrements, it must be added that Professor Arberry does not seem to have tried anything more than copying the bare minimum of explanations already available in other Western translations of the text. I am sure that a greater effort on his part to comprehend the ideas behind a song or a group of verses which are not too clear at first glance would have revealed to him much more than he apparently had been able to offer in his notes. "The Song of Tahira" (p. 92), for example, is in reality one of the most beautiful and famous poems composed by Tahira herself, which Iqbal must have read in some Bahā'ī source either in India or in England. Arberry does not mention this.[4] The second poem under Tahira's name (p. 96) is a composition by Iqbal himself, reflecting the principle of progressive revelations of God, which is so fundamental to the Bābī and Bahā'ī religion. Only in light of this basic teaching can one understand what Iqbal wants Tahira to say. Arberry, apart from giving no comment on this point, unfortunately seems to have missed the message.[5] The subject of verbs in the vss. 2287-88 and 2290-92 (i.e., "meets," "turns," "passed away," "lies," "be") is "frenzied servant of God" in vs. 2283 rather than "passion" in vs. 2285 (p. 86). The true sense of Tahira's statement is, thus, unfortunately lost.[6]

Iqbal's original Persian, due to the complexity of philosophical ideas, is, of course, sometimes not clear enough. It would be the translator's task to remove any such obscurities. Arberry has no doubt achieved this task in most instances. That some uncertainties have still remained and that some evident mistakes have been made will be shown in the following examples which were found on some randomly selected pages carefully compared with the original text:[7]

Iqbal, p. 54, vs. 1: *ḥaqq*; Arberry, vs. 835, "love" instead of "God"; Bausani, "Dio"; Schimmel, "Gott." Of course, Arberry translates this word correctly in many other places, even on the same page only two verses later.

Iqbal, p. 45, vs. 5: *naẓar*; Arberry, vs. 712, "glance." The poet means, I believe, "reason" or "intellect," as opposed to "heart" (*qabl*) in the same verse. Bausani, "sguardo"; Schimmel's version is freer and somewhat different.

Iqbal, p. 134: *nim-shab az tāb-e māhān nim-ruz*; Arberry, vs. 2121: "midnight, a world half day in moon's gleam." More correctly, it would be: "Midnight it was, yet midday in the gleam of its moons."

Iqbal, p. 136: . . . *ke pā nagodhāsht be jāda-e ke dar u kuh-o dast-o daryā nist*; Arberry, vss. 2153-54, ". . . who never set foot on any high-road that ran over. . . ." The line should read: ". . . did not run over. . . ."

Iqbal, p. 138: *chand dar afkār-e khod bāshi asir*; Arberry, vs. 2187, ". . . how long will you be. . . ." should read ". . . for how long you have been. . . ."

Iqbal, p. 143: *buy*; Arberry, vs. 2261, "smell" should read "color."

Below I quote some examples of the difference in the translations which are caused by the ambiguity of the poet's expression itself:[7]

1. Iqbal, p. 144, vs. 6: *kohnagi-rā az tamāshā mirbarad.*

   Bausani, p. 126: "Rapisce alla vista ogni vecchia cosa."

   Schimmel, p. 110: "Reisst zur Schau empor die ältesten Dinge."

   Arberry, vs. 2286: "Removes from vision the old and stale."

2. Iqbal, p. 145: *bolbol az way ranghā andukhteh.*

   Bausani, p. 127: "L'usignolo per lui ha tesoreggiato colori."

   Schimmel, p. 111: "Die Nachtigall legt an ein bunt Gewand."

   Arberry, vs. 2300: "The nightingale daubed with colors as its result."

3. Iqbal, p. 161: *shisha-rā bogdākhtan 'āri bowad.*

   Bausani, p. 136: "Non ci vuole nulla per fondere un pezzo di vetro."

   Schimmel, p. 121: "Glass zu schmelzen ist ein Kinderspiel."

   Arberry, vs. 2530: "It were a shame to melt a piece of glass."

While speaking of what method of translation a translator should adopt, Arberry quotes two passages from *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, a short one and a longer one, both of which Iqbal has translated himself from *jāvid-nāma*. These are, indeed, free interpretations, a method which is allowed the author alone. For others, especially scholars, loyalty to the original text must remain the prime concern. Professor Arberry has followed this course. For his translation, he says, ". . . the aim has been to adhere as closely as possible to the meaning of the original Persian" (p. 16). Women and translations, some have said, have one quality in common: they both are either only beautiful or only faithful. That this maxim does not hold in the case of women needs no proof. As for translations, I sincerely hope that Arberry's translation of *jāvid-nāma* will serve as good evidence of the falsehood of this statement.

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NOTES

1. The Italian translation, *Il poema celeste*, with extensive notes by Alessandro Bausani; one-volume translation, Bari, 1965, the German translation, as well as the Turkish one of 1958, by Annemarie Schimmel, *Buch der Ewigkeit*, Munich, 1957; the English version, *The Pilgrimage of Eternity*, by Shaikh Mahmud Ahmed, Lahore, 1961.

2. Annemarie Schimmel (tr.). *Botschaft des Ostens*, Wiesbaden, 1963.

3. *iqbāl-nāmā* (a publication of Danish Magazin, Teheran), 1330 A.H./1951, p. 74.

4. Professor Schimmel is also not explicitly clear in this song; see *Buch der Ewigkeit*, p. 106 and her introduction, p. 14.

5. See Bausani, *Il poema celeste*, notes 144 and 147, p. 121 and p. 126.

6. The German translation is also not free from this error. *Sehnsucht* ("passion") is made the subject of the above-mentioned verbs (pp. 110-111).

7. I have used the original text in the 1945 edition by Entezami Mission Press, from which the quotations in this review have been taken. This edition, incidentally, has many typographical errors; for example: p. 13, vs. 6, *koshud* for *goshvd*; p. 14, vs. 9, *avr* for *var*; p. 25, vs. 7, *koshā* for *goshā*, p. 145, vs. 6, *nafas* for *naqsh*; p. 149, vs. 5, *gāhi-gāhi* for *gāh-gāhi*; p. 149, vs. 7, *ad* for *u*; p. 150, vs. 4, *mnzr* for *mntẓr* (*montaẓar*); p. 207, vss. 8-9, *anbār* for *anbān*. This last error is a serious one which should be checked perhaps with the manuscript of the text.

NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

Ghulam Abbas: born in 1909; has written only two books of stories, but is considered very highly by all the critics. The story translated here is from the second book, *jaare kii caandni*.

Jamal Abro: b. 1924 in Sangi, Larkana District, Sind; he started writing in 1940; his works deal primarily with social problems and have been translated extensively into Russian.

Alauddin Al-Azad: poet, novelist, story writer, essayist and playwright. See *Mahfil*, II.2., for another story.

Robert Anderson: Professor of American Thought and Language at Michigan State University and presently an acting editor for *Mahfil*.

Alessandro Bausani: Professor of Persian and Urdu at the University of Rome; author of histories of Persian and Pakistani literatures; has translated Iqbal and Ghalib into Italian.

Janet Powers Gemill: teaches English at Gettysburg College.

Renate Gerulaitis: holds a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan where she submitted a dissertation on Goethe's *East-West Divan*; she teaches German literature at Oakland University.

Zia Haider: works in the Bengali Academy, Dacca; writes poetry, plays, short stories and songs; has produced many stage and television plays in Dacca.

Abdullah Husain: his novel, *udaas naslen*, won Pakistan's highest literary award, the Adamjee Prize, in 1963. The story translated here first appeared in *savera* in 1962, and was his first published work. See *Mahfil*, II.2., for a section from the novel.

Heshmat Moayyad: was educated in Germany, has taught at the Oriental Institute in Naples, and presently teaches Persian in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations of the University of Chicago.

N. M. Rashed: b. 1910; leading Pakistani Urdu poet; his latest volume of poetry is entitled laa = *insaan* ("nothing = man," 1969); has worked for United Nations Radio in New York and is presently in Iran with UNESCO. See *Mahfil*, II, 2, for additional poems.

Enver Sajjad: a doctor by profession; writes plays and stories; paints. The story translated here is from his recent collection *ista'aare* (Lahore, 1970), which he also illustrated.

Pabitra Sarkar: has taught Bengali Literature at Jadavpur University; writes poetry, acts; at present working for a Ph.D. in Linguistics at the University of Chicago. (Mr. Sarkar has asked us to add the following note to his translation of the original Bengali article that appeared in *amrita* (Calcutta) in February, 1970: "The author, though born in what is now called East Pakistan, is not a citizen of Pakistan, but belongs to that narrow ethno-cultural unit called the Bengali. He is concerned with everything that happens to his culture, hence this article. His being a Hindu is totally irrelevant to what he has to say here. Further, his purpose has not been to flaunt his own opinions, but to present in summary the ideas of the proscribed authors.")

Annemarie Schimmel: Professor, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University; author of *Gabriel's Wing*, the highly acclaimed study of Iqbal's thought; has extensively translated into German from Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Sindhi and Urdu.

Syed Waluillah: author of several novels, plays and books of stories, has received several literary awards; works in the Foreign Service of his country. See *Mahfil*, II.2., for another story.